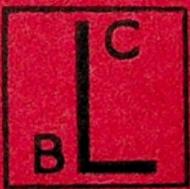


# “PASSED TO YOU, PLEASE”

by

J. P. W. MALLALIEU



LEFT BOOK CLUB EDITION

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# “PASSED TO YOU, PLEASE”

BRITAIN'S RED-TAPE MACHINE AT WAR

*by*

J. P. W. MALLALIEU

*Author of “Rats!”*

*With an Introduction by*  
HAROLD J. LASKI

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Throughout this book, I have written about "red" tape. In reality, the colour of the ribbon used in Government departments to tie up bundles of papers was long ago changed from red to white.

But this is of little importance outside Fleet Street, where, for the past nine years, I have acquired my bread and butter, warm companionship, and a fairly complete set of false values.

J. P. W. M.

DELPH.

*June 1942.*

## INTRODUCTION

BY HAROLD J. LASKI

### I

IT WILL, I think, be generally agreed that Mr. Mallalieu has succeeded in the very difficult task of writing a book on the English Civil Service that is at once amusing and interesting. If I venture to add to the suggestive reflections with which it closes I plead two reasons in excuse. The first is the importance of the subject, and the general realisation that some, at least, of our most cherished dogmas have been brought into question by the experience of the war. The second is the probability that we are on the threshold of an age of profound institutional reconstruction, and that it is highly unlikely that this will leave the present status of the Service unaffected. No doubt a discussion of such a vital theme ought most usefully to be undertaken by someone who, like Mr. Thomas Jones, for instance, has known the habits of the Service from within for long years, and, particularly, has intimate acquaintance with that mysterious area where the official mind joins with the ministerial mind to produce the administrative process. Like Mr. Mallalieu, I have to speak as an outsider. I can claim only that for over twenty years the study of the Civil Service, here and abroad, has been a considerable element in my professional duties; and that, as a member of government committees and, for sixteen years, of the Civil Service Arbitration Tribunal, I have seen a good deal of officials from close at hand. What follows assumes, on my part, profound admiration for the incorruptibility of the Civil Service in this country, a full recognition of the modest rewards with which its members are, on the whole, content, and a knowledge, based on a comparison with the Services of France and the United States, that the zeal of the British Civil Service in the performance of its duties has grown consistently with the development of the area of its functions.

This said, I observe that, in general, we entered the war with the conviction that the Civil Service was broadly adequate to any task to which it might be called; and Mr. Mallalieu has provided at least an index to the reason why this is one of the

articles of our faith least likely to survive the war. The administrative class, above all, has shown an absence of imagination and audacity, an unwillingness to press for experiments proportionate to the urgency, which make a new Bentham one of the supreme requirements of the post-war age.

What are the obvious reasons for this inadequacy? The first, I think, is the fact that the predominant temper and outlook of the administrative class represent too narrow an area of public opinion; for even those in the Service who, like Sir Horace Wilson, have climbed into power from below are promoted as much for their "soundness" as for their capacity. The major assumptions of the important officials are roughly those of the ruling class in Great Britain; and they do not easily incline either to policies or to methods which might disturb the comfort or confidence of that class. They have competence, tact, and a real zest for administrative perfection; but they regard all principles to which they are unaccustomed, all experience alien from their own, as dangerous and impracticable. When, therefore, they come, as with the war, to a crisis period, in which the classic assumptions they make are called into hazard, they tend to set the limits of experiment more narrowly and less audaciously than either the times permit, or the circumstances demand.

A second reason is connected with this, though its origin is different. Little of the war of 1914 had been expected or planned. The result was that new Departments were rapidly created, and entrusted to new men. They were mostly young; and their habits had not been hardened into a routine by long years of a traditional discipline. In this war, the main administrative innovations had been planned; and the men chosen to fill the vital places were either middle-aged officials already set in their ways, or retired Civil Servants brought back to give their experience to the common effort. The result was that not only did tradition control the normal problems in their new scale, tradition controlled the new problems also. The men in charge were wedded to habits they were largely incapable of questioning. There was none of the freshness and flexibility so striking in the war of 1914.

A third reason, I think, lies in the impact of criticism by the House of Commons on the administrative process. The theory of the Civil Service is that it does not make mistakes; it is, of course, like other human institutions, capable of monumental blunders. But one of its main ardours, to which immense energy is devoted, is the concealment of those

blunders from the public view, and especially from the view of Parliament. In the game of question and answer in the House, it has become an accepted rule that, while a Department must not evade the truth in its reply, it can be economical of the truth, and may be skilful in the provision of the perspective in which it sets the truth. This has the twofold advantage of saving the Minister from difficult situations and preventing attacks on detail from ascending into investigations of principle. Anyone who studies the replies of the Service Departments in the House of Commons to questions on rearmament from 1936 to 1939, and compares them with the facts revealed by Viscount Gort's despatch on the 1940 campaign in France and Belgium, will, if in an extreme instance, see the consequences of the system.

Now I cannot myself believe that it is not dangerous for men who assist in the making of vital decisions to devote any part of their energies to building this twilight world. It makes them anxious to have as little as possible seen in its stark clarity; it persuades them to postpone the consideration of anything which may arouse acute controversy; and it tends to make them shrink from those positive innovations which so easily put a bureaucracy on the defensive. More than this. The knowledge that any of its actions may mean that a powerful interest will use the House of Commons as an instrument of attack begets a habit of avoiding the action which may offend the powerful interest. The result on the Service is to breed a race of men a large part of whose ability is devoted to building a strong case for letting well alone, on the unstated assumption that what is, is necessarily well. Such a service does not easily adapt its habits to the bitter exigencies of war. Innovation on the grand scale, utter frankness, relentless attack upon obstructive interests, rapid adaptation to the unexpected, the ruthless rejection of the men who do not rise to the occasion, these are the qualities for which war calls in officials; and they are pretty exactly the qualities against which the main genius of our Civil Service has been directed.

It is important, moreover, that whereas the Civil Service in the last war followed in the wake of eight years of the most active reforming government this country has ever known, the Civil Service in this war followed on eight years of governmental inertia. Not only was the Cabinet averse from great measures; the Opposition in the House of Commons was never strong enough to prick it into positive action. The men who became the chief officials in this period had not been schooled

into audacity by the experience of using great power for great ends; rather they were asked to show how far the principle of *quieta non movere* could be taken in the epoch of the positive state. Somnolent politics made for somnolent administration; the "viewy" man was unsound. Anyone who compares the atmosphere at Washington in the epoch of the New Deal, with the atmosphere in Whitehall from 1931 to 1939, would be deeply impressed by the contrast. Washington was young, experimental, alert, incautious, excited; each of these qualities would have evoked stern disapprobation in Whitehall. The men who exercised influence there acted upon the assumption that there were no new truths, or, at any rate, no uncomfortable new truths, to be discovered in social policy; the lines of Britain's bargain with fate had been finally drawn. But the New Dealers at Washington went about in the belief that great change was almost worth while of itself; and they lived in the faith that great change might, at any moment, discover new principle. The "weary Titans" of Whitehall seemed to have lost the vitality and audacity of their American colleagues; and they did not suspect that the result of their outlook was a loss of the power to think out afresh the foundations of their thought.

To two other elements in the situation it is worth while to direct attention. One of the outstanding characteristics of the Constitution since 1916 has been the growing supremacy of the Prime Minister. That has led, I think, to a habit in the Civil Service of keeping a weather-eye cocked on the Prime Minister as a matter of special importance. More: it has meant that in those realms of policy in which the Prime Minister took a special interest, and in which he had strong views, it was not easy for an important official to have any influence unless he accepted the premisses of the Prime Minister. The fate of Lord Vansittart is the decisive commentary upon this situation. But it had two more subtle effects. The first was a kind of prenatal control on the views of any ambitious official which were likely to make him *mal vu* in 10 Downing Street; and the second was a tendency to promote to the highest places those officials who would not add to the overwhelming burdens which already rest upon the Prime Minister by forcing him to the continuous revaluation of principles he held to be vital. This has not made, in the inter-war years, for the emergence in Whitehall of men of the type of Sir Robert Morant; it has given a new status to pliability. Neither knowledge nor courage has mattered so much as the ability

to fit the frame of assumptions within which the Prime Minister dwelt.

The other tendency is the increasing habit of the Civil Servant, either before, or after, retirement, to accept an important post in the business world. This has led to the emergence of relations—typified by the career of the late Lord Stamp—hardly possible, perhaps hardly even thinkable, between 1870 and 1914. The prizes of the business world are great; and an able man, who feels either that the highest rewards of his own profession are not enough, or that, at sixty, a dignified leisure on pension will not exhaust his energies, can now see new vistas before him. Anyone who surveys the record in this field can hardly avoid the sense that it has already exercised an important, if only partly conscious, influence. It is true that the resounding vigour of the Fisher Report on the Air Ministry case is proof that the Service realises the importance of the principle that integrity is the foundation of official influence. But there remains a vital gap between the results of conscious ambition and the adjustments of half-suppressed hopes. We have not discovered how to bridge that gap.

## II

In a revealing chapter of this book Mr. Mallalieu has explained how closely the structure and habits of the Civil Service reflect the structure and habits of the society in which it operates. It is because the survival of democratic government seems clearly to involve what Mr. and Mrs. Webb have called "planned production for community consumption" that I believe the adjustments the post-war Civil Service will require are likely to be profound. This, clearly, is not the place to dilate upon them at length; this is Mr. Mallalieu's book, and not mine. But there are certain principles which will require examination, certain others, which we have taken for granted, that it will be desirable to re-assess. I venture to draw attention to these as a fitting pendant to Mr. Mallalieu's conclusions.

1. While recruitment by competitive examination is likely to remain the main source of appointment to the Service, it will require to be supplemented by other methods. Officials will be drawn from persons above the normal age of entry to the Administrative Class on the ground of special qualifications. Mr. Churchill's appointment of Sir William

Beveridge to the post of Director of Labour Exchanges in 1908 is an example of the kind of thing I have in mind. Such men may be recruited for particular pieces of work, for a given period of time, or for the permanent staffs of the Departments.

2. A separation will have to take place between the financial and establishment functions of the Treasury. A separate Minister of Personnel is required to whom all questions of recruitment, training, promotion, pay and other conditions of service will be entrusted. The present fusion of functions in the Treasury has the undesirable result of making financial considerations unduly influential in personnel problems.

3. A revision of methods of training in the Service is long overdue. This revision has two sides: (i) steps need to be taken to create a Staff College for the Administrative Class, and for promising recruits from the lower grades; (ii) a full scheme of training in the Service to enable the younger members of the lower grades to qualify for promotion to the upper grades should be instituted by the Minister of Personnel in conjunction with the universities.

4. Steps should be taken to make the comparative study of public administration an academic subject of university status with full facilities for research.

5. The principle of sabbatical leave, with facilities for travel, needs to be developed. Officials need the refreshment which comes from the direct knowledge of foreign experience and experiment.

6. The present pretty rigid separation between the national and local Civil Service should be abolished. Transfer from the one to the other, as in the recent case of Sir G. H. Gater and Mr. L. C. Salmon, should be normal and not exceptional.

7. An official should be entitled to retire from the Civil Service on proportionate pension or gratuity after five years in a Department. The present system puts an excessive and undesirable premium on security and encourages men to stay in the Service who have neither interest in nor aptitude for administration.

8. The present fairly rigid barrier between the administrative side of the Service, on the one hand, and the scientific and technical sides on the other, should be withdrawn. The qualities which made Sir George Newman so distinguished a Chief Medical Officer to the Ministry of

Health ought to be considered as not less relevant to the highest administrative posts.

9. Where the administrator and the scientific specialist disagree over a policy in which the expertise of the specialist is important, it should be customary for the Minister to hear the specialist's view directly if that is desired by the specialist.

10. There is no valid case for the retention of the marriage bar in the case of women or against the principle of equal pay for equal work.

11. It is desirable to introduce an impartial third element into the National and Departmental Whitley Councils. The full consideration of the experience available in the lower grades (which is often of high value) will not be given by a body in which the official side is a single grade of the Service and effectively has the last word. The recent failure of the Board of Inland Revenue to give proper attention to the Staff side's proposals for tax reform is a good example of the weakness which mistakes place in the hierarchy for insight into the problem.

12. Below the Administrative grade, there is no reason for maintaining the present barriers against political activity on the part of Civil Servants; but, in all grades, election to Parliament should act as automatic resignation from the service. Nor is there any valid reason for maintaining the ban on the right of Civil Service trade unions to affiliate, if they so desire, to the Trades Union Congress.

13. The case for a fully equipped Central Bureau of Statistics and Information is overwhelming. It exists apart from the need for separate Intelligence Sections in the different Departments. It should have a comparable relation to the position now occupied by the Government Actuary. It should be under the direction of the Cabinet Secretariat.

14. Both National and Local authorities ought to develop a much closer relation than at present exists with the Universities for the purpose of research into their problems. It ought, e.g., to be natural for the city of Manchester to ask the Engineering Department of its University to report upon its electricity service, or the Colonial Office to use the Department of Anthropology in the University of London to study on its behalf the problems of economic reorganisation in Malaya. The necessary safeguards of the relationship are: (i) the independence of the University in making the enquiry, and (ii) publication of the results. No university would

remain unfettered if it began to make private investigations for Departments.

15. It is important to bring the Civil Servant in closer relation with members of Parliament. To this end, two reforms are desirable: (i) each Department of State should be related to an advisory committee of members of the House. These committees would be consultative and not executive. They should discuss policy with the Minister and his officials, initiate enquiries into administration, and be consulted on the issue of orders and regulations arising out of delegated powers. (ii) All Bills in the House of Commons, which are not discussed in Committee of the Whole House, should be considered by a procedure approximating to that of committees of local government authorities, where officials can attend for the purpose of giving information.<sup>1</sup>

16. Decentralisation of functions wherever a department is regionally organised should be strongly encouraged; and, whenever possible, local advisory committees should be associated with the officials concerned. A Labour Exchange ought to have its advisory committee of trade unionists and employers as naturally as it has its manager.

17. Far more encouragement should be given to officials to work independently at research in their field of work; the present ban on publication without permission should be revised. It ought to be as natural for a Civil Servant, say in the Ministry of Agriculture, to publish his views on rural problems as it is for Mr. M. Ezekiel, of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, to be encouraged by Mr. Henry M. Wallace, then its Secretary, to discuss the reorganisation of American farming. This attitude is desirable not merely because it aids the official to think out issues beyond the day-to-day problems of administration; it is also a useful check on the tendency of influence in the Departments to follow the line of the hierarchy unduly; and it is one of the ways, at least, in which evidence of fitness for promotion can be objectively secured.

18. More adequate steps need to be taken by the Departments to humanise their public relations. This is not merely a matter of multiplying Press Offices. It is partly an endeavour, e.g., in the simplification of terms, to make the impact of its work as intelligible as possible; it is partly a matter of constant assessment of the effect of its work on those with whom it is concerned. The Board of Education

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my *Grammar of Politics* (7th ed.), pp. 349 f.

has a constant flow of reports on schools from its Inspectors; but it lacks any constant flow of reports on its Inspectors from teachers. Nor are there enough independent enquiries into administration or sufficient mechanisms to see that reasonable action is forthcoming after important criticism has been received. The folly, for instance, of the Colonial Office officials who took the possession of pamphlets by Sidney Webb, Tolstoy and Anatole France as evidence of a tendency to sedition among the Maltese ought not to be left to the Colonial Office to repair; for the evidence is grimly overwhelming that, without persistent pressure in Parliament, or a Royal Commission, the Colonial Office does not correct it.

19. The Parliamentary heads of Departments must find time to know more of their officials than the half-dozen permanent chiefs and the particular experts in charge of some aspect of policy with which they are dealing. Lord Haldane's relation with the War Office offers a model in this regard; the more usual experience is its direct opposite. A wise Chancellor of the Exchequer would have heard Mr. Keynes before he revalued the pound in 1928; it is not sufficient compensation to confer a peerage on him in 1942. Generally, it may be said that the atmosphere of the Departments, especially the more historic ones, is still too much that of a Royal Court with an excessive emphasis on the prestige of status and an undue desire to safeguard the Minister from the blast of inconvenient cross-currents of doctrine, especially where these come from below and not above.

20. It is important to realise that no official failure of modern times has been so outstanding as that of the Diplomatic Service in the inter-war years. It has lacked knowledge, energy, and vitality; its contacts have been painfully narrow; and its criteria have belonged to a dead world. Anyone who compares Sir Nevile Henderson's *Failure of a Mission*, with the American Ambassador's Mr. Joseph E. Davies' *Mission to Moscow* will at once see the evidence for this argument. The proposals made by the present Foreign Secretary, Mr. Eden, for the reform of his Department after the war go a very small way to meeting the defects revealed; and, as a problem in time, it would be something like fifteen years before their results begin to show in the direction of the Foreign Office. It is not enough to insist on "democratising" the Foreign Service; exactly

as with the armed forces, democratisation is the reflection of a democratic society. So long as British society remains the curious mixture of aristocratic remnants, plutocratic influence, and a popular base from which occasional elements, judged sound, are permitted to stray upwards, our Foreign Service will be adapted to climates of opinion like those of Franco Spain or the Vatican, but they will be largely irrelevant in Moscow or Washington; and proposals like Mr. Eden's will only enable the problem to be evaded for another generation.

### III

But it is time for the reader to have the pleasure of making Mr. Mallalieu's acquaintance. I cannot end more fitly than by quoting from a letter written to me by a student of mine whom the fortunes of war have made into a temporary Civil Servant.

"The Service", he writes, "lacks understanding of the real life of the country for which it operates. The answer does not lie in a change of personnel. Since the war, the Civil Service has been diluted beyond recognition, and the results have varied from good to vicious. Where improvement has come, it has been normally by the impact of external reality rather than by internal introspection.

"My own answer is: It's a system, *i.e.*, the Civil Service developed as a kind of polite, respectable and unobtrusive scavenger in a *laissez-faire* society, undertaking those works which offered no profit to individual enterprise, which could not by their nature be operated by individual enterprise, or in which the operation of individual enterprise would have so evidently anti-social an effect that even the conscience of a *laissez-faire* society could not stand it. And in this character, it necessarily evolved a routine of laboured, orderly, and un-hurried disposal. Its nature, therefore, was that of a respected and non-intervening recluse. Affairs now demand from it constant, exact, and just intervention; in fact, more than intervention: direction. Its tradition and system just are not designed for this; more, they are so set, that not only has it, over years, absorbed a high proportion of the country's most intelligent, able and conscientious individuals and shaped them to its structure; it has digested a vast number of more varied spirits and, in a short time, done the same with them.

"The personnel of the Civil Service in fact represents its nature, and not *vice versa*. The administrative class bases

itself on two principles: (i) the humanistic: truth can always be revealed by discussion; (ii) the universalist: a man must be capable of understanding anything and of doing anything. The first denies the unity of theory and practice, the second the fact of the division of labour. Between them, they at least partly explain the delay and hesitancy of the Service in tackling any problems which are socially complex, 'technical', and potentially explosive.

"The executive class provides, in the staff officer, the backbone and stomach of the Service. He is the repository of routine and tradition; he has been steeped and drilled in it since adolescence. Normally, he is incapable of imagining, much less organising, departures from them. He is therefore the key to its stegosaurian inflexibility.

"The clerical class is largely mass paper-fodder, to whom both initiative and reason are forbidden. This fact is at the root of much of the apparent ignorance, almost brutality, of the Service in its handling of the vast multitude of minor and personal problems and tragedies which have sprung out of the war. Modern tactics depend on the intelligent co-operation of an army of reasoning individuals; an army which depends on the manipulation of unthinking, unresponsive and unenthusiastic masses, is bound to fail.

"My answer to the problem therefore is that democracy demands an administration which is *by nature*, as well as spirit, democratic, *i.e.*, the administrators must direct, the people participate; and 'the people' is not an undifferentiated mass, but a complex of planes and spheres of activity and interest. The interaction between the administrators and the administrated (I had almost said 'the conflict') must be direct at every level of report, decision, action. At present, this impact is beset by buffers, filtered through a pile of layers, from the *top down*. I do not argue that it should be felt from the bottom up alone, but that it should be real, and present at every level. I can only think of two practical examples of my meaning in recent history, neither probably perfect, and both my own reading of their content. One is certain projects of the New Deal, particularly the T.V.A.; the other is the detailed discussion and participatory planning which preceded the Five-Year Plans in the Soviet Union."

This is the spirit I want myself to see in the post-war Civil Service; but it will need, I think, a new society in order to obtain it.

## CHAPTER ONE

ONE AFTERNOON in the summer of 1860 a sheet of paper was handed across the table to an official from the Treasury. It was a letter, copied on a letter-press seventy-four years previously, and still legible.

It was produced that afternoon because a Parliamentary Committee had discovered that every one of the 20,000 letters and memoranda prepared each year by the Treasury was written with pen and ink, that for every letter or memorandum written and sent out, at least two more were copied in pen and ink and retained.

The Committee was shocked. It suggested that as letter-presses had been commonly used in private business for a century and had been in existence for two, they might now safely be introduced into his Majesty's Treasury. And here, for the information of the Treasury, was a sample of letter-press work.

The Treasury was not impressed. Treasury copyists, said the official, had always given satisfaction with their pens and ink. Many of them had been in the office, man and boy, for forty years. They knew their job and did it. They knew the way of the office and followed it. A change would be unfair to the copyists. It would be undignified. Anyway, it would not work.

So the Treasury stuck to its pens and encouraged other Government offices to stick to theirs. It did not give in to presses until 1885; and by that time, Remington's had been selling their typewriters for at least twelve years.

Every innovation in office procedure has struck the same Treasury negation. Telephones. . . . When a telephone in the Treasury was first suggested, the Permanent Secretary said he could think of no circumstances in which he would not send a messenger or go himself rather than use such an instrument. Forced into a corner, the Treasury still insisted that the number of telephones allotted to it should be no more than four—one for the doorkeeper—and that other Government offices should have no more than one each for the whole building.

Typewriters. . . . The Board of Inland Revenue, which was in touch with the facts of life, introduced typewriters very shortly after they were invented. They were so successful that Sir Algernon West, chairman of the Board, tried a sales talk on his friend Sir Reginald Welby, Permanent Secretary to the Treasury. He was not successful at first, but experience with Inland Revenue had taught him persistence, and in April 1889 he induced Sir Reginald to admit a carefully selected typist, with her machine, to the Treasury building. In May, another one was let in to keep the first from pining, and then the whole Treasury sat back and confidently waited for disaster. It waited three years, but all that happened, apart from a noticeable speed up in routine business, was that in 1892 one of the old copyists retired on pension. His place was filled, after no more than the usual amount of minute-writing, by a third typist and her machine.

Shorthand. . . . Even though it had gone so far, by the admission of a third typist, as to concede that what was good enough for Ralph of Leicester in the reign of Henry III was not necessarily good enough for Mr Edward Goschen in the reign of Queen Victoria, the Treasury might have staved off another innovation for a good while longer but for Mr W. L. Jackson. Mr Jackson had been out in the world. He had even been in business. In spite of this, he became Financial Secretary to the Treasury, and told the inmates about the marvels of shorthand writing. It was introduced just as the first dictaphones were coming on the market.

1.

The Treasury is the Senior Prefect of the Civil Service. It regulates. It reproves. It even, at times, encourages. It is responsible for the maintenance of discipline; it is, God help us, responsible for the improvement of efficiency. When it says "Yes", action of some sort by Government departments is advisable. When it says "No", a thousand heads are gratefully shaken all over Whitehall.

It is, therefore, no wonder that in peace-time the whole Civil Service had come to rank with mothers-in-law and sausages as England's national joke. But in war-time,

particularly this war, the Civil Service is no joke. Its activities can mean the difference between life and death for individuals; for the nation they can mean the difference between victory and defeat.

In this war the responsibilities of the Civil Service have been expanded to cover almost every aspect of life. It is difficult today to produce, sell or buy any article without meeting a Civil Servant or his handiwork.

True, the National Savings Committee sees fit to put out advertisements suggesting that the initiative for production is still in private hands. If you go out and buy things you don't really need, says the Committee, you are compelling some firm to use men and materials which might otherwise be employed in the war effort; whereas if you buy war bonds, you are releasing these men and materials for war production. But this is just part of the user's mumbo-jumbo, and has little relation to the facts.

It will not make the slightest difference to the number of airplanes, tanks or other weapons whether John Smith spends his pound notes on beer, invests them in savings bonds or buries them in the garden as a foundation for his sweet peas. It is the Government, and not the consumer, who decides what will be produced..

By the telescoping of firms, and the concentration of industry, non-essential production is largely, and could be wholly, dependent upon the will of the Government.

As for essential war production, even in the period of extreme *laissez faire*, the Government was a direct producer of arms. Its production activities immediately before and during this war have greatly increased not only through the expansion of existing arsenals, but also by the erection of entirely new ones in all parts of the country.

Besides its direct work, the Government has become indirectly responsible for a wide range of output through the shadow-factory scheme, in which a plant is built at the expense and to the design of the Government and is managed by a private firm on lines the Government lays down.

Most widespread production responsibility of all is the

control exercised through the issue of contracts to firms which are independent and private, but which are subjected to Government regulation on product, quality, rate of output and a mass of other details which an individual management usually sees to for itself.

In addition to its responsibility for much of the production inside the country, the Government has assumed responsibility for all goods acquired abroad.

As in the last war, it has bought up supplies of meat, sugar, wheat, wool and many other raw materials on its own account; and besides deciding what goods shall be imported and in what quantities, it also decides what goods shall be exported to pay for these imports in so far as they are not covered by arrangements like Lease-and-Lend.

The distribution of the goods produced at home or acquired abroad is another Government responsibility. To some extent this responsibility is directly assumed, as with the British Restaurants which are opening all over the country. Where the private machinery of distribution is used, the Government fixes prices, both wholesale and retail, and through its rationing system it tries to allocate fairly the amount that any one person may buy.

All this, it will be agreed, is a big job.

## 2.

It will also be agreed that the job is not being done well.

Business men, big and small, say that the country is being strangled by Red Tape, but they may be prejudiced. They would resent even the intervention of the Almighty in what they are pleased to look upon as their private concern.

But what of the reports of the Select Committee on National Expenditure, a committee drawn from all parties in the House of Commons, but dominated by partisans of the established order? What of the reports of M.P.s, solid Government supporters, who break into factories in disguise and see the facts for the first time? What of the reports of ordinary working men and women earning better wages than ever before and yet prepared to come out on strike because of the muddle and waste they see around them?

Many of these reports might have been written by

Florence Nightingale herself as she struggled for supplies at Scutari, or by Mr Pepys after an inspection of the Admiralty dockyard at Chatham. They show that Britain's machinery of government was not even adapted to meet her peace-time needs; that now Britain is involved in total war, her machinery of government is anachronistic beyond hope; that much of her resources is either being squandered or left unused; that much of her energy is being suppressed; and, that disasters have occurred which need never have threatened.

Some of the misdeeds of the Civil Service since war broke out seem trivial enough in isolation. For example, forms follow the flag, wherever it may be planted—in farm, in factory, in barracks and in shops.

Major Turton told the House of Commons on March 6, 1941, that every division in the Army was compelled each week to send in to headquarters a description by number of every vehicle it possessed.

There are various reasons why this information might be useful and necessary to headquarters. One is that Army possessions disappear unless carefully watched. But, perhaps as a result of this watch, it often happens that there is no change in the number of a division's vehicles from one week to the next. Yet, said Major Turton, a division may not send in a return marked "No change from previous week". It has to fill up the whole form in detail over again. That job takes two officers of the divisional staff two whole days each week.

Assuming that divisional staff officers are men of special skill, it seems rather wasteful that even one of them should be allowed to spend two days filling up a form which, when completed, will add nothing to what the War Office already knows.

Yet this procedure is enforced not in one division but in scores, and experiences such as this in divisions of the army can be duplicated from the experience of almost every factory, group or individual which has dealings with a Government department.

Further, many of the forms sent out by the Civil Service are not only useless but incomprehensible as well. One morning, poultry-meal sellers all over the country

came down to breakfast and found an envelope in their letter-boxes marked "Ministry of Food". Inside was a printed circular including these two paragraphs:

*"For any given figure in Column (1) above (representing the number of units entered at (A) of Part 2 (b) of Form F.S.P. 14) Columns (2), (3), (4) and (5) above give the corresponding figures to be inserted at B, C, D and E in Columns (5), (7) and (11) of Part 2 (b) of the Form.*

*"If the number at A is over 20,000 it will be necessary to find B, C, D and E in three stages from; first: Part 2 of the Form, obtain the numbers in Columns (II) to (V) corresponding to the next lower multiple of 20,000," etc.*

With a form like that even an income-tax specialist might have some difficulty. A High Court judge who filled in his application for a ration book in accordance, he thought, with the printed instruction issued by the Ministry of Food, found at the end that he had made twenty-four mistakes.

What, then, of the poultry-meal sellers, some of whom run one-man businesses, few of whom, however large their business, have even a High Court Judge on their pay-rolls to elucidate the explanations of Government Departments? Some would not be able to fill up the form at all, many would fill it up incorrectly, all would be compelled to spend time which, in a war, may be valuable even to the humblest.

Since such forms as these are showering not only upon poultry-meal sellers, but also upon steel-works, coal-mines, railway managers, factory builders and anyone else who has come within a stone's throw of a Government official, it is not surprising that Time is no longer officially on our side.

The accumulated effect of wrestling with forms which are either superfluous or obscure may well be significant. Significant, too, may be the vexation, the waste and delay caused by the rigid application of Government rules, whether or not they fit the situation. To some London women and children they were fatal.

Local authorities who, with the Ministry of Home Security and the Ministry of Health, planned the evacuation scheme, split London up into "safe" and "evacuation"

areas. Sometimes the dividing line ran down the middle of a street, and when air raids began both sides of the street were blitzed. But while children from the north side had been moved, children from the south side had stayed and had to stay.

What happened in London, happened elsewhere. Two small boys, living with their grandparents in Liverpool, were bombed out, like hundreds of others. Like hundreds of others, they were taken to the country under the city evacuation scheme. Some weeks after they had been housed in Burnside, near Kendal, an official discovered that their grandparents' home had stood a few yards outside the Liverpool evacuation area. He decreed that the children should be brought back to the city and, when the family with whom the boys were billeted protested, he stopped their billeting allowance.

*It is annoying to have neat paper plans upset by untidy airmen or by irresponsible children, but it seems undesirable that lives should be sacrificed to the petty exactitudes of narrow routine. Generals, not notoriously flexible of mind, modify and even scrap their plans in the field. Journalists every night reshape their front pages a few minutes before edition time.*

So even a Civil Servant should be able to vary his routine for the convenience, welfare and safety of those he serves.

### 3.

Unfortunately, some Civil Servants in this war appear to be more unbending than the sternest autocrat. One example comes from a shipbuilding company which is running ships built to Government specifications. Stokers in these ships complained about the type of boiler which had been installed by Government order. They said that another type, previously in use, was more convenient. The owners agreed and added that the second type was also lighter and more efficient. But when they asked the Merchant Shipbuilding Department of the Ministry of War Transport to hear their views, the Ministry replied that it was not prepared even to discuss the question.

It may be that the Ministry had good reason for preferring one type of boiler to another. Plant or materials

used for making the lighter boiler may have been urgently needed for other purposes. But at least the Ministry could have explained the position to the shipowners.

As it was, the attitude of adamantine negation left owners and stokers alike with a feeling that the control of shipbuilding at a time of great emergency had passed into the hands of narrow indolents who would not even hear the views of the men on the spot.

Pigheadedness such as this is commonplace among British industrialists and other dictators. But it should be no part of a Government that professes to be democratic.

Unnecessary form-filling and the rigid enforcement of narrow regulations are characteristic of Britain's war-time Government. But there are more serious disorders.

Though the bulk of war-time production is still in private hands, the Government issues the contracts, lays down specifications, is partly responsible for the supply of labour, machinery and materials. Business men complain that the Government is unfitted for this job because few Civil Servants can or will take the responsibility for making a decision.

One firm reports that in the spring of 1937 it was given an order for guns. It immediately set about preparing the plant, and five months later was ready to begin production. But specifications for the guns had not arrived, and did not arrive, in spite of repeated demands, until the summer of 1938. They had been passed from department to department in the War Office—"to you for comment, please"—and nearly a year's production had been lost.

Vacillation by the Ministry responsible for taking a decision is one cause of delay. Another is the difficulty firms have in finding out which Ministry is responsible for a decision.

In the summer of 1940 the Ministry of Home Security issued a Defence Regulation calling on certain factories to establish strong points for their own defence during an invasion. On August 14 one firm applied to the Ministry of Supply for a licence to buy steel plate for the strong point. In time it received a form which it filled in and returned to the Ministry.

The Ministry then told the firm to apply to the Ministry of Home Security. On September 9 the firm did so, and on September 21 the Ministry of Home Security told the firm to apply to the Director of Fortifications and Works at the War Office. On September 26 the firm applied to the War Office, and the War Office replied that the application had been forwarded to the Western Command, to whom it should have been sent originally. On October 3 the Chief Engineer, Western Command, wrote to the firm telling it to apply to the Ministry of Supply. Which, as they say at the pictures, was where we came in.

Evasion of responsibility is curiously combined with overlapping of control. While one official is passing the buck to a colleague, another is tumbling over himself to issue instructions which contradict those already sent out by a rival.

The Tenth Report of the Select Committee, issued on August 8, 1940, said that a manufacturer had received a letter from one department giving complete priority to certain weapons. Two days later he received a letter from another department telling him to ignore these instructions and treat all armament work as of equal importance.

Another witness before the committee said that if he followed all the instructions he received from various Government departments, his works would be full of half-finished products.

In their dealings with outside industry, then, some Civil Servants are casual and thoughtless, at the very least. But in their own direct industrial operations Government departments are downright negligent.

In one area the Air Ministry planned certain factories. The Ministry of Supply planned others. When both sets of factories had been set up it was found that local coal supplies were insufficient even for the needs of existing factories. It is not certain whether either Ministry had realised this before it went ahead with its plans. But it is certain that neither at any time took the trouble to tell the Mines Department that coal would be needed from outside the area.

The same thing has happened about electric power. Factory sites were acquired by Ministries before anyone

had found out whether electric power was, or could readily be, available. As the provision and installation of electric equipment in war-time is a long and costly business, the cost of building the factories became unnecessarily large and the time needed to bring them into production unnecessarily long because there was, in fact, no power near selected sites.

There can be no excuse for this. The same mistakes were made in the last war and, whatever else may be said against the Civil Service, no one can complain of the insufficiency of its records about what has happened in the past. Yet, so witnesses from the Central Electricity Board told the Select Committee, it was not until mid-summer 1940 that Government departments were made responsible for seeing that power was available on the sites they themselves chose.

Such lack of foresight is commonplace in Government work. On January 29, 1940, the Air Ministry approved a scheme for a factory which was to make airplane parts. The factory was to cover an area of 90,000 square feet, and the cost was to be £156,824. The contract for building was placed in February, and it was agreed that it should be completed by June 30.

Unfortunately it was found that there was not enough labour in the area, and by May it was clear that the factory would not be finished in time. In spite of this, and without making provision for additional labour, the Air Ministry decided to increase the size of the factory by 100,000 square feet, bringing the total cost to £258,324.

Work continued so slowly that in September an official from the Ministry of Aircraft Production, which had taken over the factory from the Air Ministry, was sent to remain on the site to speed matters up. Neither he nor anyone else could do anything without a great increase in labour, and by April 1941 only 25 per cent. of the necessary plant had been installed. As late as August of that year the plant was still incomplete.

In spite of this experience and the full knowledge that labour could not be made available in the area, either for building plants or for operating them, unless a large number of new houses were built forthwith, the Ministry of

Aircraft Production did little or nothing about houses, but proceeded to plan and contract for the building of several more factories in the same district.

4.

That is the Civil Service at war. It is snowed under with paper, bogged in routine. It looks long before it leaps, and then lands in the most obvious pitfalls; it is first dilatory in coming to a decision, then arrogantly adamant in sticking to it though circumstances change.

Why?

Because in any community the machinery of government is framed to suit the needs of the class which dominates that community. . . .

Because, in a capitalist community at least, the needs of the dominating class are different from the needs of the community as a whole. . . .

Because the effective prosecution of this war in the interests of the community as a whole calls for the marshalling and harnessing of the country's resources behind a carefully planned and directed drive. . . .

Because the only machinery of government available has been especially framed or adapted to do just the opposite—that is, to allow a small group to do as they please with the country's resources in their own interests. . . .

Because we are now attempting to transform the nature and functions of the Government machine without transforming the community from which it springs.

The present inefficiencies of the British Civil Service are being everywhere used by capitalists as an argument against Socialism. No argument could be more bogus. The British Civil Service is a product of British capitalism, is designed to serve it, and therefore could not meet the needs of capitalism's fundamental opposite, Socialism. A Socialist would no more think of using the present Government machine in a Socialist society than, say, a soldier would think of bringing home his Bren gun to keep order among his children.

If you are dissatisfied with the way this country is being organised for war, do not concentrate on altering the machinery of organisation. Concentrate rather on altering

the basis of organisation, which, in Britain today, is still private ownership and private profit. Tinkering with the machine may help you to remedy specific abuses, but it will not clean out the cesspool from which those abuses spring. As we shall now see.

## CHAPTER TWO

*To the Coffee-house with Captain Cooke, who discoursed well of the good effects in some kind of a Dutch war and conquest (which I did not consider before, but the contrary)—that is, that the trade of the world is too little for us two, therefore one must down."*

Thus Samuel Pepys in his Diary of February 2, 1664. No wonder he had not considered the point before.

### I.

At thirty-one Pepys was employed by the King as Clerk of the Acts of the Navy. He knew that, however rich the country might be, the State machine was bankrupt. As Clerk of the Acts he was Secretary to the Navy Board, which, under the King, had the job of building and maintaining the ships, providing the men and supplying the equipment and food for the Navy.

Though all this was the King's responsibility, it was Parliament which provided or refused to provide the money to do it; and Parliament was having an economy drive. Pepys and his colleagues had been told the year before to cut down the annual cost of the Navy from £375,743 to the £200,000 that Parliament was prepared to vote, and no provision whatever was made for the repayment of outstanding debts.

These debts, some left over from Cromwell, others going back as far as Charles I, were large, and included the wages of sailors and officials as well as the bills of contractors. This meant that no one could be dismissed from the service until money had been found to pay what was owed to him; the only way to get the money was for the Navy Office to borrow from money-lenders; and since the State

credit was so bad, money-lenders charged interest at 12 per cent. or more.

It also meant that even if the Navy Office cut down its orders for supplies, the contractors, if they agreed to sell anything at all, put up their prices to cover the risk of long delays in payment. So the cost of the Navy was kept up while its efficiency went down.

What was happening with the Navy was also happening with all the other services of the Crown. There was no standing army. Such land force as there was had long been the King's personal affair.

Its officials, such as the Attiliator Balistarum, who used to look after the King's catapults, and the Clerk of the Ordnance, who used to look after the King's store of battering-rams, were the King's personal friends.

Its officers were amateurs, in the Army for what they could get—usually the maidens of the countryside—and its men were mostly professional mercenaries willing to be transferred at short notice from one side to the other.

Money for them, by Pepys' time, was supposed to come by vote of Parliament, but so little was doled out that in 1673, between March 25 and December 10, the official expenditure of His Majesty's Secretary at Warre was £14 19s. This included the purchase of "7 best penknives, 1300 large Dutch quills, 4 double bottles of inke and 6 4d. rulers"—no doubt, for filling forms.

The troops themselves either lived on the country or were billeted in the local pubs. But payment for billets was so inadequate and so long delayed that publicans took to pulling down their signs and even throwing up their licences at the approach of the army to their town. It was not until 1718 that money was first voted to set up barracks for the troops—£9,300 for four barracks in the North of England with one bed for every two men.

Pepys realised all this, and told his coffee-drinking friend that it was no time to begin a war. He was right. War was begun, but it did not end until the Dutch had sailed into the Thames and burned the British navy moored there for its own protection.

In November 1664 Parliament made a two-and-a-half-year grant of £2,500,000 for the war, but because the tax-

collection system was inefficient, a long time was needed to raise the money, and much that was eventually raised went to the tax collectors and not to the State.

When later Charles II tried to borrow in the City, he was told that his talk of invasion was a scare invented to raise money for his mistresses. So the Navy went short of money, men and materials.

When the Dutch Fleet was reported off Solebay, Pepys found that of twenty ships available to attack the Dutch only seven had enough men or provisions on board to sail. At that moment the whole of one ship's company was outside Pepys' office shouting for arrears of pay, the dockers in the Navy yards were on strike and the ropemakers had gone off haymaking to earn enough for their families' meals because neither had been paid for months. Many contractors had refused to supply any provision for the ships, others who continued to deal either cheated the Government or were themselves cheated by their own agents, so that provisions which the contractor guaranteed would last until October actually gave out in the middle of August.

The result was that when the fleet ultimately did get to sea it had to put back again without engaging the enemy because the stocks of meat and beer had given out. Eventually all the contractors struck. One of them reported, in 1666, that he had given the Navy credit for £8,000 worth of goods, but had had nothing paid back, and Pepys himself stated that he had received only £1,315 to pay war debts of £150,000, while the total accumulated debt of the Navy was about £1,000,000.

There was nothing for it but to lay the Navy up. The ships were to be brought into the Thames, a boom was to be placed across the river and the coast forts strengthened. But the forts were not strengthened, and the men who manned them were not paid.

So when the Dutch landed at Sheerness, the unpaid soldiers in the fort ran away, and sailors, tired of payment in bills, went over to the Dutch, saying they would fight for dollars, not for tickets.

As for the boom, it was carelessly placed too low in the Medway, and the Dutch broke through it. The unpaid

dockers refused to tow the battle-ships higher up, having belongings of their own to remove to safety. So De Ruyter set fire to a part of the Fleet and towed away the *Royal Charles* as a prize.

So much for the effectiveness of Britain's machinery of government in the seventeenth century.

2.

In the circumstances of the time it could hardly have been more efficient than it was. The new world was opening. An old order had collapsed, and another was not yet established in its place.

For long there had been limited but strong central government by the Crown acting through the Privy Council and Justices of the Peace. It was financed by income from the Crown lands, from tithes, from customs dues and from forced loans. Its functions were to maintain order, to foster certain trades of national importance, such as ship-building and fishing, which were useful for a navy, and to discourage others, such as sheep-farming, which cut down the amount of tillage and supplies of food.

Outside those limits the great landowners of the country looked after the areas in which they lived and ran their estates as self-sufficient units.

The discovery of the new world had begun to undermine this system. First, it greatly increased the expenses of Government. Competition for the new sources of wealth brought conflicts with other nations, and that meant more money for defences than could be provided out of the Government's previous income. If this income was to be supplemented by greater taxation, the taxability of the country had to be increased by the establishment of new trades. Hence the monopolies granted to private groups to develop particular trades and industries under Royal licence.

But there was a second reaction from the opening of the new world. Hitherto the country had lived on the basis of a large number of comparatively small economic units, which, for the most part, were self-sufficient. Life in any locality centred round the estate, which provided the food, the wool for clothing, the leather for shoes. The clothier,

the tanner and the cobbler in the locality owned their own tools, but worked on material furnished from the estate.

The aim was to live from year to year off the produce of the estate, which could not be stored and which was not, as a rule, sold outside. Such general trading as there was consisted principally of exclusive monopolies and was, in any case, strictly controlled, so that no new competition could upset an established man's livelihood.

But the supply of precious metals from the new world began to alter this by providing wealth that could be easily stored instead of consumed as soon as it was produced; and the raw materials and markets of the new world provided an opening in which this stored wealth could be used for profit.

Instead of resting content with the produce of his estate, a landowner could sell it and use the proceeds for equipping expeditions to the Americas. Instead of getting his raw materials solely from the estates, a manufacturer could now buy them for himself from abroad. Both landowner and manufacturer saw the chance of setting up in industries the products of which could be sold in the new markets.

So just at the time when the Government was seeing the need for increasing monopolies in private hands and increasing its control and its taxation on industry, private individuals were beginning to see the opportunities of capitalist expansion on their own account and to resent both the exclusive privileges given to small groups and the restrictions and 'burdens imposed on their own activity by the Crown. This clash came to a head in the Civil War, which broke up the central government developed by the Tudors and extended by the Stuarts.

But the Civil War was decisive for no one except Charles I. Some of the power was taken from the Crown and vested in Parliament. Notably the Crown was henceforth made dependent on Parliament for money. But there was no decisive line between the powers of the Crown and the powers of Parliament.

This was due to the fact that Parliament could not itself decide what powers it wished to exercise. The conflicting interests inside Parliament of the landowners, who wished

to protect their landed source of wealth, the monopolists, who wished to protect their privileges, the new class of merchants, who wished to trade anywhere, and the new industrial class, who wished to produce anyhow, made concerted Parliamentary action difficult, and clear-cut, systematic government impossible.

Executive duties, notably in defence and in ill-defined functions of trade regulation, remained with the King because the groups in Parliament were too busy with their own affairs to bother with the Army and Navy, and because the monopolists who relied on the King's regulation were still too strong to be entirely dislodged from their trade privileges. But the supplies of money, and, hence, the effective machine, necessary if the King was to do these duties properly were withheld because a majority of Parliamentarians, however disunited on other matters, were agreed in their dislike of further interference in their economic affairs by the Crown or by anyone else.

### 3.

That was the state of affairs when Samuel Pepys entered the King's service. The King had some legislative responsibilities, Parliament had others. Both had need of an executive machine to make their decisions effective, the King to run the armed forces, and Parliament to enforce laws governing wages and to collect taxes. But because it was determined that the King should not again increase his power, Parliament, through its control of money, preventing the King from employing an executive sufficiently competent to carry through even such decisions as he was allowed to make; and because, for its own decisions, it had to use the same executive machinery as the King, when Parliament cut off the King's money it spited itself.

Pepys tried to meet this situation by tinkering with the machine. That was all one man could do.

He found that, because the King had little money with which to pay proper wages, the King's servants made their living out of bribes.

The firm of Alsopp, Lanyon and Yealsly offered Pepys £150 a year if he secured them the contract for victualling the Tangier garrison at 3s. 1½d. a week, and £300 a year

if he got them the contract at 35. 2d. a week. The firm got both the contract and the higher price. There was little danger of Parliamentary inquiry, though, when receiving bribes by post, Pepys used to empty the coins from the envelope with his eyes shut so that, if pressed, he could say he had seen no money in the accompanying letter. But on his own account in later years Pepys stopped taking bribes, and saw that his subordinates stopped taking them too.

He also stopped, in his own department, the system whereby appointments were given to men not because they were competent, but because they were influentially connected. He had himself got his appointment as Clerk of the Acts through the influence of his cousin, the Earl of Sandwich. When Lady Monk pointed out that as wife of the head of the Army she was entitled to a rake off on all appointments and had promised the job to someone else, Sandwich wrote that her husband would take it ill if he tried to name the officers of the Army, and that as Admiral of the Fleet he hoped to be able to make at least one appointment to the Navy.

So well recognised were the opportunities for peculation that Pepys was offered £500 if he would withdraw his application for the job and £150 a year for a half share in it.

The reforms he carried out won him the title, after his death, of "Father of the Civil Service". In his own lifetime they made him stand out among his contemporaries. When, after the disasters of the Dutch war, he and other Government officials were brought before the Parliamentary Committee of Miscarriages, he would have won immediate exoneration if his defence had not been so long. But by the time he had finished, the members of the committee were so hungry that they would not vote; and when they came back from their delayed lunch they were so drunk that they could not keep awake, let alone vote.

But all his hard work, his conscientiousness and the standards he imposed on his colleagues and on the contractors who supplied the Navy left quite untouched not only other Government departments, but also the basis on

which the country as a whole was organised. They were therefore ineffective. Just how ineffective we can see by going forward 150 years.

### CHAPTER THREE

THE YEAR 1854, and the guns were again booming. Not this time in the Medway within sound of London, but around Sebastopol, where Britain was trying *her* hand at invasion, with as little preparation as she had faced invasion by the Dutch.

The Army was sent out with clothing which, adequate for summer manœuvres in the south of England, was of little use during a winter campaign in the icy Russian climate. When new equipment was demanded, it was first delayed and then jumbled. Snow-boots, needed for the winter of 1854, arrived in the spring of 1855, and were all left-footed. The seventy field-guns possessed by the army might have done good service at Waterloo, for they were all of the 1815 design. They had been satisfactory when blocking a charge of cavalry, but when it came to smashing fortifications at long range, they were a danger only to the soldiers who fired them.

Arms supplied to the individual soldier were equally out of date. The Army authorities still stood by Brown Bess, the smooth-bore musket, although one critic had offered to sit in an arm-chair all day and be fired at with a Brown Bess at a distance of 100 yards *provided it was aimed at him carefully*. Food was always short, transport almost non-existent, and the official treatment of the wounded little better than murder.

#### I.

Miss Nightingale went out to the Crimea with volunteer nurses and with funds from private sources. At Scutari she found that the building designated as a hospital had large cesspools immediately underneath and that the stench coming through the floors pervaded all the rooms above. There were few bedsteads, no basins, no towels, soap,

plates, knives or forks. "What", asked Dr Hall, the senior medical officer of the Army, "does a soldier want with a toothbrush?" He was equally unimpressed when told that there were few bandages, drugs or stretchers.

Throughout Miss Nightingale's stay in the Crimea, the Government representatives were either unhelpful or openly obstructive. The Generals scoffed at her as a mere nurse, Dr Hall—he won the K.C.B., "Knight of the Crimean burial-grounds," said Miss Nightingale—tried to stop her activities by refusing all rations to her or to her nurses; and when Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, British Ambassador at Constantinople, was asked how the *Times* Fund for sick and wounded could best be used, he seriously replied, "By building an English Protestant church at Pera."

The suggestion was less uninspired than it sounds. An English church, with graveyard attached, was a necessary annexe to any English Army hospital of that time.

Even those officials who were not definitely hostile allowed themselves to be paralysed by their own routine. Miss Nightingale found that many of the soldiers, who should have had meat, were getting only bone. She found that Army Regulations decreed that the food should be divided into equal portions, but failed to lay down any rule about first taking out the bone. That, head-shaking officials solemnly told her, "would require a new regulation of the service".

But Miss Nightingale had her own ways of dealing with Red Tape. She found that soldiers were being brought to hospital with little clothing. She asked the Purveyor for shirts, trousers, socks, and was told that by Army Regulation, framed apparently for home service in peace-time, a soldier, before entering hospital, must provide himself with sufficient clothes for his stay. It had occurred to no official that during a campaign, knapsacks, coats and even boots might be lost, shirts and trousers torn. So Miss Nightingale had clothes sent out at her own expense until she could browbeat the War Office into action.

Even then the clothes were delayed. She found that some shipments were dumped into the customs house at Scutari, where they stayed because no one had authority

to get them out. Worse, others were packed underneath munitions in ships which passed Scutari and went on to Balaclava.

Once a supply of food and clothes sent out in this way went to Balaclava and then returned to England unloaded. Many times supplies made several journeys in the hold across the Black Sea before eventually reaching the cold and starving wounded in hospital.

Miss Nightingale forced the Government to build a store-house at Scutari and appoint men competent to see that stores meant for that port were actually unloaded there and placed where they were accessible.

She had still to cut through one more piece of red tape, however, before she got the clothes to her wounded. When the first consignment of 27,000 shirts came up from the store, the Purveyor refused to unpack them "without a Board", that is, without permission from the Board of General Officers, who were charged with inspecting all clothing destined for the infantry or cavalry.

Three weeks went by before the Purveyor got his Board and the wounded their shirts. But when the next consignment arrived, Miss Nightingale was ready. Twenty strong women, under her direction, reached the cases first, tore them open and carried off the shirts despite the breathless bleatings of the Purveyor.

She had gone out to nurse the wounded. Before she left, she was providing nearly all their medical stores, much of their clothing and some of their food. More, she made herself Army building contractor.

Once, when every ward in her hospital was full, she heard that a large batch of new wounded was on the way. The only place in which she could possibly house them needed extension and complete renovation. Lytton Strachey, in "Eminent Victorians", describes what her procedure should then have been according to Army regulations:—

"The proper course was that a representation should be made to the Director-General of the Army Medical Department in London; then the Director-General would apply to the Horse Guards, the Horse Guards

would move the Ordnance, the Ordnance would lay the matter before the Treasury and, if the Treasury gave its consent, the work might be correctly carried through several months after the necessity for it had disappeared."

Instead, Miss Nightingale hired her own workmen, carried through the alterations at her own expense, and, when the wounded arrived, housed them.

Miss Nightingale was a personal friend of Sidney Herbert, Secretary at War. She was backed by the Queen, the Press and the public. She had plenty of private money to draw on. She came from the ruling class. She was brilliantly able, untiring and of strong character.

With all these advantages she had the greatest difficulty in providing what today would appear the most commonplace services for the troops. If she had not had those advantages, the official machine would have gone on letting forty-two die of every 100 admitted to hospital, just as, to the very end of the war, it left the fighting men sometimes without enough food, often without enough clothes and always without enough munitions for the job they had to do.

## 2.

Obviously Mr Pepys' tinkering 150 years before had made little difference. Obviously and inevitably. He had put ointment on a few pimples, but he had not even tried to purify the blood-stream. So Miss Nightingale still had to face the same sort of conditions that horrified Pepys.

Nineteenth-century England still had not got an efficient machine of government, because a class which was thriving on *laissez faire* was still allowed to dominate the country. Capitalist expansion, well under way in Pepys' time, had been given a new and tremendous impetus by the Industrial Revolution, and was not yet past its peak at the time of the Crimea. Capitalists, whether they owned the land or whether they owned the mines and factories, wanted no aid from the Government. They wanted no interference from anybody. Therefore they saw to it that there was no strong Government machine.

In the towns the King's bailiff had been ousted, and

the big families, controlling the chartered corporation, had taken control. In the country the King's sheriff gave way to the Justices of the Peace, all drawn from the landowning class, whose resolutions on county administration at Quarter Sessions needed no further authority.

These powers permitted the landlords to work their lands, and other people's, in whatever way was to them most profitable.

Even the Tudors had not entirely succeeded in preventing landlords from enclosing common lands. When the central authority was removed, virtually all common land was taken over, and small peasant farmers, who had relied on the commons for grazing their cattle, were driven to work on the landlord's farms.

After the Act of Union with Scotland, Parliament was careful to treat as the personal property of the chief land which had previously been considered the property of the whole clan, and then stood by while the Sutherlands, the Montroses and the like turned people off land in the north of Scotland to make way for grouse.

With the land in their own hands, and countrymen compelled to work for them, the landlords did everything they could to maintain their position. When Joseph Arch formed his agricultural union and farm-workers came out on strike, they were evicted from the landlords' houses by benches of J.P.s who were themselves landlords; and when, as late as 1887, Parliament passed the Allotments Act, which gave local councils power to set aside land for small market gardeners, the landlords, through the Councils they controlled, saw to it that the Act was not worked.

Certainly no landlord wanted interference from any Government.

Nor did any industrialist. England's flying start with the Industrial Revolution had given manufacturers seemingly unlimited markets, and they wanted no restrictions on their enterprise. They were prepared to see only such Government regulation as helped their own business.

It was a nuisance, for example, that there should be two competing and independent standards of weight,

Troy and Avoirdupois, and that there should be no less than three separate legal gallons. They agreed that the Board of Trade in 1824 should enforce a common standard. Bankruptcy was a menace to trade. The Board of Trade could properly protect creditors from fraudulent bankrupts. It could draw up and enforce model constitutions for joint-stock enterprises which, at the instance of the South Sea Company, who wanted to eliminate competition, had been dubbed "public nuisances" by the Act of 1719.

But the Board's activities must be confined to such narrow activities as these. It must certainly not concern itself with hours and conditions in the factories or itself enter trade to the detriment of private individuals.

This attitude was shown clearly in the Government's relations with the railways. Between 1786 and 1821, thirty-six private railways had been built. After 1821, when the first public line was sanctioned, from Stockton to Darlington, construction was rapid. Yet the only sign of Government policy towards the nation-wide innovation was Huskisson's expressed determination "to break up the overgrown monopoly which is now enjoyed by the canals".

Though lines were springing up everywhere, regardless of need, and the Board of Trade was begging for powers to control this growth, a Parliamentary Select Committee recommended that the supervision by the Board of Trade "should be exercised in the way of suggestion rather than in that of positive regulation".

So railways became an irresponsible craze, and in 1846 schemes were put before Parliament involving the expenditure of £500,000,000. The very next year the boom collapsed, and promoters came rushing to Parliament for leave to abandon the schemes they had been given power to develop. So it went on, from boom to slump and back to boom, with Government officials straining to act, but being held back by a Parliament pledged to free profit-making and *laissez faire*.

It was not until the inefficiency of some privately run service became an actual menace to the profits of the majority that the Government was empowered to step in.

There was, for example, little control of shipping lines—

though nine different departments of the Board of Trade, acting more or less independently, were concerned with shipping in one way or another. Only when British shipping lines became so inefficient that Britain's export trade was hampered were consuls instructed to make investigations into the state of our ships that arrived at foreign ports.

The consuls found that many captains were habitual drunks, knew little about navigation and were even unable to read or write. In consequence, a special marine department of the Board of Trade was formed in 1850, but proposals to remedy the deficiencies of the merchant marine were minuted, "Consideration postponed".

In 1876 the Government was empowered to check overloading by enforcing a Plimsoll line on all ships, but even then shipowners were left free to place the line where they thought fit. That, indeed, was *laissez faire*.

### 3.

John Stuart Mill summed up the attitude of the dominant class to the machinery and functions of government. He said that it was not in the State's interest to have specially efficient officials, because they would interfere with liberty. The State's interest must then have been well served by the Civil Servants it had from 1700 to the Crimea. The majority of these were incompetent, idle and corrupt.

Until 1816, Parliament did not even take responsibility for paying them, but left them to make what they could out of fees and bribery.

When Commissioners were appointed in 1797 to look into a particularly alarming increase in the cost of the Post Office packet service, they found that all the leading Post Office officials were financially interested in the service.

So many rake-offs were to be had that one firm did an active business buying and selling places in the Government service. Once a place had been bought there was no necessity for the buyer to do any work. Anyone, from the auditor of land revenue to the charwoman of the Secretary of State, could employ a deputy. The two

• Auditors of Imprest, who had the job of scrutinising the accounts of Government departments, never went near their office and yet were able to draw an income of as much as £20,000 between them in a good year, out of which they had to pay deputies considerably less than half.

No wonder a father would invest in such places for his newly born son. Foresight by a father might even make the child Secretary of the Latin Language to the Secretary of State, who used English, Warehouse Keeper to the Stamp Office, which had no warehouse, or Constable of the Castle at Limerick, where there was no castle. For such jobs it was not even necessary to employ a deputy, and all the fees could be retained by the nominal holder.

Attempts to abolish this sale of sinecures, like the attempt to suppress the sale of commissions in the Army, were regarded as attacks on private property. "Sinecure offices are given in the nature of freehold tenure," said Pitt in the House of Commons in 1797; "Parliament has expressly said they will respect them as freehold property: and if, in answer to this solemn declaration, it is urged that Parliament may rescind their former resolutions, I say they may, by a parity of reasoning, destroy every kind of property in the country."

Sinecures were, in fact, a recognised part of the political machine, and were doled out by the Patronage Secretary to deserving supporters or corruptible neutrals. Inevitably, a Bill to abolish sinecures was thrown out five times running by the House of Lords.

Of course, there were officials who did attend their offices to go through the motions of doing what work there was. Of them, Sir Charles Trevelyan, Secretary of the Treasury, said in 1849: "There being no limitation in regard to the age of admission in the great offices of State, the dregs of all other professions are attracted towards the public service as to a secure asylum in which, although the prospects are moderate, failure is impossible provided the most ordinary attention be paid to the rules of the Department."

From such men it was impossible to find officials who could take on responsible jobs, and outsiders had con-

tinually to be brought in. "We are involved in a vicious circle," said Trevelyan. "The permanent civil servants are habitually superseded because they are inefficient, and they are inefficient because they are habitually superseded."

But his complaints were in vain. The minimum of government suited the needs of the ruling class, and until those needs changed or a new class took control, the machinery of government would continue to creak and rust, and the Army, Miss Nightingale or no Miss Nightingale, would continue inefficient.

#### 4.

Parliament had recognised the need for a standing army as long ago as 1689, but because Parliament would not tolerate a strong executive, that army was maintained in a high state of inefficiency. Money was withheld, with the result that it was impossible, even in peace-time, to maintain Army services.

For example, in 1803 the office staff of the Quarter-Master General, who was supposed to organise the supply of stores and clothing to the troops, consisted of seven officers, three clerks and two messengers. Such a staff could not do the work intended for it, and until the Crimean War the duty of providing clothing for the troops was left to the Colonel of each regiment, who made fine profits out of it.

Further, partly because there was not enough money to provide proper service pay, and partly as a survival from the time when the gentry were responsible for raising regiments and had to find some way of recouping their expenses, a colonel could sell commissions in his regiment.

During the Napoleonic Wars a well-known lady of fashion had bought a lieut.-colonelcy for her footman. A commission, once bought, remained the property of the man who bought it, and a retiring captain, for example, could sell his captaincy to anyone who had the necessary money, regardless of seniority or fitness.

In this way rich lieutenants bought promotion over the heads of more efficient and senior colleagues. Any man could become a Lieut.-Colonel in the infantry by

spending about £7,000 and a Lieut.-Colonel in the Household Cavalry by spending about £13,000. Attempts to reform this system were resented as an attack on property in which nearly all the great families of the land had a stake.

When, in 1871, a Bill to end the system came before the Commons, it was passed only after bitter resistance, and was thrown out by the Lords. It looked as though the State would have to buy out the officers' rights—at a cost of £8,000,000. But Gladstone, when he wanted, could be a match for any vested interest. He persuaded the Queen to revoke certain Royal Warrants, without which the purchase of a commission was illegal, and so bypassed the Lords. The Lords, in their fury, prepared to pass a vote of censure on the Queen, but before they reached the voting stage Goodwood Races intervened; and when the sitting was resumed fury had cooled and no more than a protest was registered.

Keeping tight hold on money was not the only way in which Parliament maintained the inefficiency of the Army as part of its policy of keeping the executive weak. Equally effective was the splitting up of responsibility for Army organisation.

There was a Commander-in-Chief, appointed by the King, who had general control over internal Army organisation and discipline at home; there was a Secretary-at-War, appointed by Parliament, and responsible to it for Army spending and for all contacts between the Army and civilians; and there was a Secretary of State for War and Colonies, a King's Minister but responsible to Parliament, who saw to the size of the force and the general control of operations.

The Commander-in-Chief and the Secretary-at-War frequently clashed with the Secretary of State. In a fit of pique one Secretary-at-War flatly told the Commons that as he was not a Minister he could not be expected to know where the Army was being sent or how the war was to be carried on.

Even more frequent were the clashes between the Secretary-at-War and the Commander-in-Chief. The Secretary-at-War could and did fill vacancies without

consulting the Commander; he granted leave to individual officers without consulting their C.O.s; without his permission the Commander-in-Chief could not move a body of troops from one place to another.

In earlier times the Commander had been allowed to demand conveyances for his troops from any Justice of the Peace, but latterly, to prevent imposition on civilians, any such demand had to be countersigned by the Secretary-at-War. So, wrote the Duke of Wellington in 1837, "the Commander-in-Chief cannot at this moment move a corporal's guard from London to Windsor without going to the Civil Department for authority."

It was not until the country had fought through the Napoleonic Wars and through the Crimean War with fifteen different departments, each of them responsible for some direct Army activity but acting independently of each other, that a War Office, amalgamating the functions of all, was formed.

Even then, the Queen's cousin, the Duke of Cambridge, who was Commander-in-Chief, held out with the Queen's help. "The right time for making changes", he had said, "is when you cannot help it", and he stuck to his maxim.

Though Parliament had decided that all Army organisation should be under one roof in Pall Mall, he obstinately clung to his own office at the Horse Guards, and only moved when the Secretary of State for War stopped all letters from going to the Horse Guards. Even when he did come to Pall Mall, the Duke continued to put Horse Guards as the address on his letters.

The failure of the Crimea and the pressure of reformers like Miss Nightingale did, then, bring about changes for the better. But the changes were only superficial. The basis of English society from which the weaknesses of organisation in Army and government were directly sprung remained intact to breed new abuses in later days.

## CHAPTER FOUR

AND so to 1942 and another war.

Except for a few museum pieces like Sir Ernest Benn and the City Editor of the *Evening Standard*, most people now agree that concerted and planned use of all our resources is necessary to win this war, that haphazard private enterprise is not enough. But few people, not even Socialist leaders who were pledged to it, are pressing for those fundamental changes in our community without which we cannot make full use of our resources.

We still have Pepys and Nightingales to fume and storm about the inefficiencies of the Government machine. But they get none of us far, because they will not or cannot alter the form of our community from which most of the abuses which they attack in the Government machine are directly sprung.

Look, for example, at this form-filling business, first of the big complaints made against the Civil Service.

### I.

In all but the smallest production unit, even under *laissez faire*, there must be some form-filling. The directors of a company cannot keep track of everything that happens in every department. If a department is exceptionally big, even the manager in charge, who is in daily touch with it, cannot always know all that is being done in it each day, unless he is kept up to date by figures supplied to him by subordinates who have intimate knowledge of their own particular section of the department.

From their reports, he can send forward to his general manager an exact picture of what is being produced and what could be produced by his department. The general manager, from the departmental reports he receives, can in turn send forward his reports to the directors, showing what is being produced, at what cost, in the whole organisation.

On these reports of the general manager, the directors can frame policy, deciding whether prices should be altered, whether new orders in old lines can and should be

sought for, whether to produce new lines to make up for falling demand in the old.

Translate this into terms, not of one production unit, but of a whole industry, and the need for exact information, and hence, for forms, becomes even more obvious.

The Iron and Steel Control, for example, is not a Red-Tape organisation built up haphazardly on Civil Service lines. It was planned and built by business men, for business needs; and by business men it is run. Yet it has forms.

It has to know what production capacity there is available in the country. That means it must know not only the actual capacity of every steel mill, but also how much of that capacity at any given time is fully occupied. It has to know how much raw material there is in the country. That means that it must require every steel mill to send in a weekly return of stocks. Because any given product may require as many as fifty different types of steel, it must have a detailed return, not only of the amount, but also of the types that can be produced. All this means forms.

But business enterprises, unlike the Civil Service, try to keep down the number of their forms. For example, because it had to know where steel was being used and why, the Control compelled every manufacturer to fill in form "M", saying for what purpose he needed steel. Thus a man who was making, say, a dozen salt-cellars or three fans which had steel parts had to fill in a form each time he booked an order.

This was irritating to the manufacturer, and meant that the Control itself was snowed under with forms. It was found that 50 per cent. of the forms actually sent in dealt with the use of only 1 per cent. of the steel supplies actually used.

The Control, unlike a Government department, remedied this. It decreed that manufacturers who were producing articles which individually used up less than 1 cwt. of steel need not fill in forms, but could get supplies under a bulk authority. But to insure that this relaxation meant no increase in the amount of steel used for such articles, the Control limited the amount of steel made available to the

1 per cent. of supplies which it had found was actually being used, and left it to the manufacturers and the steel producers to distribute this 1 per cent. equitably.

2.

Now, the Civil Service is not concerned with only one industry, but with nearly all of them. It is not concerned only with industry, but with every aspect of human life in this country. From its earliest beginnings it has needed information before it could act, and that information has been most conveniently secured by the issue of forms.

When Pepys, stirred by the disasters of the Dutch war, began to reorganise the system under which the Navy was provisioned, he asked each Admiral to let him know at stated intervals what amount of victuals he had on board, how much more he would require and where his ship was likely to be during a given week. Without such knowledge Pepys could not ensure that ships were kept well stocked. But the Admirals of that day, like modern Service chiefs and industrialists, did not appreciate this. They wrote to the King complaining that their requests for supplies were being met by requests from Mr Pepys to fill in forms.

So, today, ships' captains complain that in the process of entering or leaving port they have to fill in forty-nine documents, and one captain has reported that before he could sail he had to fill in 10,500—three for each item of cargo.

Similarly the food industry says that it had received some 400,000,000 forms by the end of the third month of the war, and the manager of a food factory, with a staff of only fifty, said that he had to employ five of this staff filling and checking the forms his firm received.

The real complaint against our Civil Service, however, is, not that it makes use of forms at all, but that many of its forms are unnecessary and that most of them are incomprehensible.

Even outside the Civil Service form-filling sometimes becomes a mere habit. In hospitals, for example, it is usual for a night nurse to write reports on the condition of each patient at the end of her period of duty. Sometimes these reports become so much a part of routine that they are

written round about 1 a.m., when the nurse has a spare moment, and long before she can tell what sort of night the patient has had. The report will run: "Patient slept well. Temperature 101; pulse 60. Bowels not opened." On one occasion a nurse produced this report: "Patient had good night; temperature 105; pulse 55. Died 5.10 a.m. Bowels not opened."

This vice of turning what may be a useful, indeed vital, way of getting information into a meaningless routine is widespread in the Civil Service.

There was that case of a Midland firm whose files were destroyed in a blitz. When a new batch of forms came in from the Ministry of Labour, the firm, without its records, could not fill in all the answers. On April 23, 1941, it received a letter from the Ministry of Labour stating that unless the forms were filled in and delivered to the Ministry *by the previous day*, proceedings would be taken. On the same morning a Ministry official arrived in person. He was told that it was impossible to put in accurate figures. "Very well, then," he said, "guess 'em."

More remarkable still was the experience of the Commanding Officer of a battery who came back from manœuvres to find that his unit was short of one water-cart worth £80, which the unit would have to pay for out of its own funds, if any. But his Quartermaster knew the workings of the War Office. First he sent in a memorandum: "Bottle, water, Mark V, value 3s. 6d.—asking approval for this to be written off on payment of the 3s. 6d." Approval was given. Later he sent in a new memorandum: "R.E.W.O. Authority A.D.G. 987; approval is being asked for the following corrigendum—for 'bottle' read 'cart' ". Approval was again given, and the unit was saved £79 16s. 6d.

Again, Lord Milne told the House of Lords on March 25, 1941: "I came across a case the other day where a form had to be signed three times in triplicate—nine returns in all—to demand one wagon; and the wagon never turned up".

Forms are a waste of time if the Civil Service does not see that they are accurate, read them and act upon them when they are filled in.

But some forms are waste of time and paper whatever is done with them. When, for example, Oldham decided to launch a save-paper campaign, its first thought was to print and circulate to every school-child in the town a paper leaflet saying that every piece of waste paper should be collected and placed in a pile. The response would have been just as effective if teachers had been asked to give their pupils a talk about the campaign, and that would not have used any paper.

It would save paper, too, if Army chaplains were now relieved of their peace-time obligation to make a monthly return of all their communicants. It would have saved both exceptionally valuable time and more paper if miners, when they were brought back to the pits to meet the coal shortage, had had fewer forms to fill in for the mining clothes they were to receive coupon free.

Each man had to fill up a form covering eight items of clothing, and had to receive a separate certificate for each store at which he bought any of these items. Further, a copy of his form had to be sent to the Inspector of Mines for countersigning. The delay before the miner actually got his clothes and went down the pit was often as much as a week, at a time when the country's coal needs were urgent.

But Civil Servants cannot do things simply. Someone, in order to alter one word in a Royal Warrant, substituting the word "half" for the word "quarter", saw fit, early in this war, to issue another Royal Warrant of 2,000 words in the *London Gazette*; and anyone who was interested enough to read it through found that all that was happening was that the dark blue ribbon on the George Cross was to be  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide instead of  $1\frac{1}{4}$ .

As wasteful were the deliberations inside a Government department about how two papers should be fixed together. When a decision was finally reached it did not appear possible merely to send the two papers off, or even to say "I've fastened these papers with a slip-on clip". The sender had to write: "It is desired to inform you that in the absence of any definite instructions, the accompanying documents have been fastened with Code No. 47/14", which was, in fact, a slip-on clip.

Even when the forms themselves are necessary and the Civil Service is anxious to make full use of the information derived from them, they are often written in such a complicated way that no one can tell what they mean.

Here is part of a three-page Air Ministry Order (534,471/36) of June 9, 1941. It means that the station equipment officer shall decide what rooms in the station are to have linoleum floor coverings. But it says: "When the resident engineer proposes to instruct the contractor to cover further floors he is to prepare a receipt in the form shown in Paragraph 3 above, completing the first three columns, and pass a copy to the station equipment officer. If that officer concurs that the floors which it is proposed to cover are in 'entitled' rooms, he is to issue the necessary linoleum to the resident engineer on temporary loan," and so on. That, though verbose, is eventually comprehensible.

But what of this Ministry of Labour Unemployment Insurance Form No. U.I. 85? It reads: "Separate departments on the same premises are treated as separate premises for this purpose where separate branches of work which are commonly carried on as separate businesses in separate premises are carried on in separate departments of the same premises". The words, all of them, are English; but by the time the reader has disentangled the sixth "separate" they might be Sanskrit, for all the meaning they convey.

Such verbiage is always exasperating, and has sometimes led to tragedy. In October 1941 a soldier's wife had to fill up a dozen forms dealing with her supplementary allowance. She was not used to such work. She said: "If there are any more of these forms, it will be the end." Next day she gassed herself.

The previous month a corn-merchant's clerk at Northampton drowned himself. He wrote a last letter to his employer: "Somehow, with sacks, orders and forms I have made a mess, not intentionally. Please forgive me for the trouble and for letting you down by forms. Good-bye, everyone."

Civil Servants should know that the forms they prepare and the regulations they issue have to be read not only by other Civil Servants and by trained lawyers, but by all sorts of people who have had only a little schooling, and that long ago, and whose current reading is sometimes confined to the headlines of a newspaper.

It is not easy to write of complicated things in language so simple that anyone can understand it. But experienced sub-editors on popular newspapers have to try it every day of their working lives. A course of popular sub-editing should be part of the training of every Civil Servant who frames a regulation or issues a form. It should also be part of the training of Prime Ministers. Mr. Churchill wrote recently: "Let us have an end to such phrases as these: 'It is also of importance to bear in mind the following considerations. . . .' Most of these woolly phrases are mere padding which can be left out altogether." Sub-edited, the Prime Minister's message would read: "Such phrases are unnecessary." And such protests are ineffective. Civil Servants still seem to prefer obscurity of language to clarity of thought, and to bury their own confusion in other people's bewilderment.

#### 4.

The reason why many of the forms sent out by the Civil Service are either obscure or meaningless is that neither in their upbringing, their training nor their daily work are Civil Servants brought into direct contact with the people for whom the forms are intended. Forms intended to provide information about an industry are prepared by men who have never worked in industry. Forms intended to help or instruct ordinary people are prepared by men who have never been in a working-class home.

Civil Servants are drawn from a narrow circle. To enter one of the general classes of the Service, you must have a secondary school education—but only one child out of every twenty-two goes to a secondary school. To enter the top Administrative Class of the Service, you must have a University education—but only one man or woman of University age out of every sixty-four actually goes to a University. Further, of every three men and women who

go to a University, only one goes to Oxford or Cambridge —but Oxford or Cambridge provide thirteen out of every fourteen entrants to the Administrative Class.

This means that the overwhelming number of men and women who enter the Civil Service come from homes that are at least reasonably well to do. They begin to earn their own living for the first time only when they enter the Service. They have no experience whatever of business or industry, they have had no contact with the way ordinary working people live. Having entered the Service, they spend the rest of their lives among people with the same upbringing and inexperience as themselves, and yet, from their arid sanctuary, they must send out a stream of directives to people they cannot know on subjects that they cannot understand.

Two things, at least, would be necessary to correct this. First, as part of his training, and as a refresher course at regular intervals during his career, every Civil Servant should be sent to work alongside the people he is supposed to serve.

But there would be grave dangers in doing this with our community organised as it is at present. To give one instance, if a man from the Board of Trade were sent to learn about industry with a particular firm, he might, when he returned to his Ministry, be inclined to favour that firm against others. Such a danger could only be removed if profit-making and private ownership were removed first.

Second, Civil Servants should be drawn not from the present limited circle, with its narrow experience, but from every stratum in society, so that those who issue forms and directions would know from personal experience in their own homes the sort of people who would have to handle the forms and how the lives of ordinary people would be affected by the directions.

But since the Civil Service must demand a reasonable level of education in its entrants, it will not be possible to draw on candidates from every type of home and upbringing until the opportunities for education are really equal for all; and that will not be possible until education is free and the poorest families are earning enough to do without

the earnings of fourteen-year-old children, or until the poorest families are earning enough to keep their fourteen-year-old children on at school and pay what fees are charged.

Even the comparatively minor evils of Civil Service forms have their roots in the way our community is organised, and will not be eliminated until that organisation is changed.

## CHAPTER FIVE

THE SECOND big complaint against the Civil Service is its slowness and lack of enterprise.

*Civil Servants 'run to paper'.* If one ordinary man wants to do business with another, he uses the telephone. But a Civil Servant writes a memorandum. The man he is dealing with may work in the next room, but the Civil Servant still writes memoranda rather than walk a few yards along the corridor.

His memorandum, once written, not only goes to the man for whom it is intended: it goes also to every official who might in any way be concerned, and action is held up until all their comments have been received.

Even when the memorandum has been fully circulated, when all the comments have come in and when action of some sort has finally been taken, the last has not been seen of that memorandum. It goes into the office files, to be dragged out again and solemnly circulated with a new memorandum whenever the point it deals with occurs again.

No wonder the War Office files now weigh 1,900 tons and stretch along 15 miles of shelves, no wonder that the registered files in the Treasury rose during the last war from 3,000,000 to 10,000,000 and, despite drastic weeding, are rising towards that figure again by a yearly inflow of some 875,000 papers.

*Civil Servants will not take responsibility.* If a decision is needed, a Civil Servant will go at once to the files to see if a similar point has arisen before. If it has, the decision given then will be given again, even though circumstances

may have changed. If it is right, no one will complain. If it is wrong, and someone does complain, the Civil Servant can always defend himself by showing that he had a precedent for what he did.

If he finds from the files that the point has never risen before, the Civil Servant will immediately pass the responsibility for making a decision on to his superior.

### I.

The procedure in a Government office is, in fact, something like this.

A letter or a memorandum reaches, say, the Treasury by messenger or through the post. Perhaps it is a proposal by a department which requires Treasury approval, or a routine request for information from a bank, or a request for financial guidance by a local authority. Whatever it is, it goes first to the Central Registry.

The clerk who opens it must see from its contents to which department, and to which division of the department, the letter must be sent. He must also go to the files to see if there are any relevant papers.

At one time this search into the files was like a voyage of discovery in an uncharted land. Until after the last war there was no card index. Almost worse, the instructions were that there should be a separate file for each paper, with the result not only that the mass of files, but also each individual paper, became altogether unwieldy. For Treasury officials had the habit of writing their comments about the subject of a paper on the paper itself and, when space gave out, of attaching further bits of paper to the original.

Today, however, the system of one paper, one file, has given way to the system of one subject, one file, and these subjects are carefully card indexed. The clerk has thus less difficulty in finding the papers he needs and sending them with the incoming letter to the appropriate division.

There they are first handled by one of the juniors of the Administrative Class, an assistant principal. If the letter deals with a routine point, amply covered by exact regulation or established precedent, the assistant principal will settle it himself. But if, as is more likely, it raises some

point that is not fully covered, the letter may begin its long trail from hand to hand.

The assistant principal will write a minute on it, setting out the point raised and showing to what extent, if any, it is covered by precedent or regulation. He may even suggest what should be done. Then letter and minute and file of papers go to the next senior man, a principal.

The principal may be qualified to give a decision himself, if the point is not of great importance. But if it is at all out of the ordinary, he will write his own comments both on the letter and on his assistant's comments and pass the lot on to the Assistant Secretary in charge of the division.

The Assistant Secretary may himself take a decision. But if the question involves any other division in his department, he will almost certainly pass letter, file, and accumulating comments, on to the head of his department, a Controller.

If the question involves not only other divisions in the same department, but also other departments, the Controller will pass it higher still to one of the joint secretaries, and if it involves some new line in policy or some exceptional expenditure, it will go on to the Second Secretary, and may, by him, be submitted to the Chancellor of the Exchequer for decision by him as the political head of the department.

By this time it will have been looked at from every conceivable Treasury angle, and it is the job of the Second Secretary or of the Permanent Secretary to concentrate all the evidence and comment he has received from below into lucid and reasoned advice on which the Minister can take a decision.

In the more leisurely days of the nineteenth century this procedure might have been harmless. It is disastrous in twentieth-century wars.

## 2.

### *Civil Servants stick rigidly to routine.*

For example, on February 3, 1915, in the middle of the last war, the Army Council felt solemnly bound to write the Treasury a formal note begging permission to hand

over to his mother the bugle, worth 4s. 9d., of a soldier who had been killed.

More remarkable still was the experience of Colonel, now Major-General, Fuller in March 1926, when he was personal assistant to Lord Milne, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. Lord Milne wanted a pair of dividers, worth 1s. 6d., and Colonel Fuller was asked to get them. This is what happened.

He wrote to the Quarter-Master General, Department 9, War Office, saying: "Would you be good enough to obtain a pair of dividers for the use of the C.I.G.S.?"

Thereupon a memorandum was circulated to every department in the War Office by some authority known by the initials D.A.D.E.O.S.: "We propose to convey approval to the permanent issue of a pair of dividers. . . . Have you any remarks from a financial point of view?"

Of several replies produced by this, one was from the Q.M.G.F. (b) to Q.M.S. (a): "No financial objection. Will you let us have this memorandum again when the dividers have been issued?"

Thereat, somebody known as D.A.D.E.O.P.S. wrote to somebody else known as A.D.O.S.P.: "Will you please arrange issue of dividers, drawing, shifting leg, double jointed, two, to Military Adviser to Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Room 217, War Office? Issue will be permanent."

After fourteen days the dividers arrived and, with them, came a request that a written report on their condition should be sent every six months. Thereupon Lord Milne sent the dividers back and went out to buy a pair for himself.

The established routine, the usual practice, is still maintained in this war. The surprises, the new conditions, the innovations of the enemy are still met with the old methods. Whatever happens, the rule is to apply the established rule.

The Government has laid down certain standards for the goods it buys, specifying the material that must be used in them and the quality generally that they must attain. These specifications may be desirable in peace-time, because it is probably right that what the Government buys should be made to last; but in war-time the necessary

durable materials may be urgently needed for some other purposes or be entirely unobtainable.

Yet a Civil Servant, issuing an order to a firm, has to be exceptionally brave if he changes specifications without the most elaborately obtained authority. Usually he goes on ordering army camps to be built of timber, regardless of the shortage of timber, the danger of fire, local material available or the changing customs of the building trade.

So it was that the Select Committee, on a visit to a Government works that was being set up, found that when steel was urgently needed for munitions, a fence of steel uprights, placed close together, was being built round the outside of the works and that another fence, also of steel, was being built inside.

Rules laid down in peace-time are in fact being rigidly observed throughout the Civil Service. In their own internal organisations, heads of departments try to maintain the peace-time system of appointment and promotion. A Civil Servant in Northern Ireland, for example, felt that he was not doing enough in the war effort and wanted more work. He was told that it was irregular to apply for more work, as he was doing everything that was expected from a man in his salary scale. The only way he could get more work, he was told, was by applying for more money. This he did. Back came the official reply: "We cannot grant you an increase in pay, but as you are apparently overworked, an assistant will be appointed to help you."

Again, the post of deputy to the head of a department in a Ministry became vacant. No one of that particular standing was available in the Service, but there were at least three people in the department itself whom the head of it considered capable of doing the job. He wrote memoranda to the head of the Ministry and to the Treasury showing the qualifications of these three. But he was overruled. None of the three had been in the Service for longer than three years, and it would be irregular to promote them permanently. Eventually it was found necessary to bring in someone as a temporary appointment from outside the Service, who had then to begin learning the job with a handicap of three years behind the other possible candidates.

Improvisation is discouraged even in the face of danger. The garden wall of a house where soldiers were billeted gave on to a public park where there was a public air-raid shelter. The owner of the house knocked a hole in his wall so that the soldiers could get quickly through to the shelter six yards away. He was told by the local council to brick the wall up again, and when he refused, the gap was closed by a steel barrier. "We cannot permit private means of access to the park," said the Council. So, when the bombs drop, the soldiers have to go out of the front door and run 400 yards along the road to the park's public entrance.

Even rules newly framed to meet the needs of war may need change in the light of experience. But they continue to be enforced long after experience shows that modification is advisable. Government departments, for months, closed down with a bang as soon as the sirens went, and continued to close long after ordinary factories and offices had taken up the spotter system of working on until immediate danger threatened. On one occasion when there were many warnings, but no bombs, twenty-eight men were kept hanging about near a Labour Exchange waiting for the green cards which would have allowed them to begin work on a near-by public air-raid shelter. Inside the closed Labour Exchange, the clerks who should have been issuing the cards were seen to be playing poker. The rule was that Labour Exchanges should close during an alert; and close they did.

### 3.

Such procedure not only makes the Civil Service unenterprising, but also frustrates the enterprise of others.

Some years ago a man invented a method of treating leather which, he claimed, would lengthen the life of Army or other boots. He managed to interest the Minister who at that time was charged with the Co-ordination of Defence. This Minister refused to test the invention there and then, but agreed that if war broke out, official tests should be made.

When war did break out, the Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, and his staff of four, had made way for the

Ministry of Supply. The inventor had to begin his agitation all over again.

By July 1940 he had reached a deadlock. The Ministry had now agreed that a test of his invention should be made, but laid down conditions, which, the inventor said, would allow a decision to be influenced by interested parties in the leather and bootmaking trade.

The dispute went to arbitration and, eventually, new conditions for the test were laid down. But the Ministry refused to test more than 200 pairs of boots treated by the inventor, although the inventor felt that the test would be fairer if 1,000 pairs were treated and offered to pay the cost himself of the extra 800 pairs if his treatment in any way damaged the leather.

On September 11 the 200 specially treated pairs of boots were sent off to various Army units for tests under ordinary conditions. On March 11, 1941, the Select Committee says in its 25th Report, the test was still not complete, and such statistical analysis as had been made was "extremely unsatisfactory" in form. Reports of any sort had been received on only 180 out of the 400 boots actually sent off for test, although the maximum time needed for an adequate test would be about three months.

Eventually, after the publication of the Committee's report, the Ministry of Supply agreed to start all over again with a proper test, in which the performance of 5,000 specially treated pairs of boots was compared with that of 5,000 untreated pairs.

This invention may well be important. Army boots, on the average, are repaired once every six weeks, and the average cost of the repairs is 4s. each pair. If by treating the leather in a special way the repairs could be made, not once in six weeks, but once in even seven weeks, the saving on 2,000,000 Army boots would come to some £400,000 a year on repairs alone, without considering the saving in the cost of buying new boots which would result from the longer total life of the old ones.

But Civil Service tradition is in favour of caution towards new ideas. All sorts of wild-cat schemes are put forward. Even good schemes may cause trouble with vested interests. So any proposal is looked at from every angle,

vetted by every department of every Ministry that may be affected, lest public money be spent wastefully, lest the Minister concerned be attacked in Parliament, lest the whole Ministry incur the powerful displeasure of some vested interest. So, for a good four years, a possibly worthwhile invention has been pigeon-holed or gingerly handed from one department to another.

4.

There are two main reasons for all this. The first is the method of training and promotion in the Service itself.

Civil Servants are divided up into five general classes, each with different duties and different methods of recruiting.

There is the class of shorthand typists and typists who enter the Service between the ages of  $16\frac{1}{2}$  and 25 after a simple exam.

Above that is the Clerical Assistant Class, whose principal job is to look after the files and fill up forms. It is composed of girls who have to pass an exam between the ages of 16 and 17.

Above that still is the Clerical Class, which is the first to have any responsibility. It is recruited by examination from boys aged 16 to 17 and girls aged  $16\frac{1}{2}$  to  $17\frac{1}{2}$ , and has to supervise the work of the Clerical Assistant Class and itself do a certain amount of clerical work. But its main job is to deal with questions which are completely covered by strict regulations and to prepare material on which its seniors can make decisions.

Next above it comes the Executive Class, almost entirely recruited from the lower grades. Its work is of the same type, but of greater importance than the work of the Clerical Class. Its members usually deal with the more important questions which are covered by regulations and also make the first survey of questions which cannot be decided by rule of thumb.

In none of these classes is there real scope for initiative or enterprise. Where a man is allowed to take a decision at all, he makes it in accordance with regulations clearly laid down or precedents clearly established. If there are

no rules or precedents covering a question, it is his job ultimately to hand the decision to someone else.

Yet it is into these classes that the great bulk of British men and women must go if they wish to serve their country's Government machine, and it is in them that they must spend their lives.

Theoretically it is possible to gain promotion from one class to another, but in practice the possibility virtually ends with the Executive Class. For one thing, out of a total of 69,781 in the general classes of the Service—which excludes all industrial workers, the minor and manipulative grades and sundry other groups—on April 1, 1938, there were only 1,480 in the top Administrative Class, which has the responsible work, compared with 39,719 in the next Executive Class.

So in any circumstances there would be only a small chance of promotion from the one to the other. In fact, even when a vacancy occurs in the Administrative Class, it is more usually filled by outsiders than by promotion. Of the 360 vacancies in the class between 1923 and 1935, only eighty-two were filled by promotion, compared with the 278 recruited by examination outside.

This means that some of the most intelligent secondary school boys and girls decide that there is not sufficient scope for them in the Civil Service, and go elsewhere. And most of those who do join are condemned to waste what ability and experience they have on jobs that are little more than routine.

The ambitious feel cramped and frustrated, the easy-going soon take the simple way, which is at all costs to avoid making mistakes or doing anything that would attract adverse attention either from their superiors or from Parliament and Press.

Above these classes is a small class of 1,400 to whom falls all the responsible work of the Service.

For admission into this Administrative Class, a University degree is essential, and a degree at either Oxford or Cambridge advisable. But one of the most usual effects of a liberal education at either of the two senior Universities is a mind that is critical rather than constructive.

In their Universities the men have been taught to see

all round a subject, and this, instead of always making for informed decision, sometimes makes for such even balancing of pros and cons that the men cannot come down on one side or the other—a dangerous characteristic in those who, almost every day of this war, have to make decisions which affect every one of us.

This characteristic, derived from their education, is fostered by the conditions they find when they enter the Service.

5.

Royal Commission after Royal Commission has recommended that promotion in the Civil Service should be on grounds of merit and not of seniority.

The Playfair Commission, appointed in 1874, said :

“In the public service, promotion should depend entirely on merit. It is the practice in several public offices to take the list of clerks in order of seniority and to promote the first man who is stated to be not unfit for promotion. Although this plan is undoubtedly an improvement upon promotion by mere seniority, it is nevertheless, in our opinion, open to serious objection.”

So little notice was taken of this that the Ridley Commission, sitting in 1886, had to say :

“We think that routine promotion by seniority is the greatest evil of the Service and that it is indispensable to proceed throughout every branch of it strictly on the principle of promotion by merit.”

In 1912 the MacDonnell Commission still found it necessary to say :

“The rule that promotion should be determined by merit, which is now formally prescribed only for a particular group of officers, should be made universal.”

And, in 1931, the Tomlin Commission had to say :

“We deprecate the use of any pressure designed to stress the claims of seniority as against exceptional merit.”

But still seniority persists today. And where merit is considered it is often ‘merit’ as decided by Civil Service

standards of, say, thirty years ago, and not necessarily merit as judged by the needs of today.

Promotion from the Clerical to the Executive Class is comparatively frequent, but promotion from the Executive to the Administrative Class is rare. To get it, a man would have to have satisfactory efficiency certificates from his immediate superiors, his promotion would have to be approved by the head of the Ministry in which he was serving and then by the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, who is also the head of the Civil Service. Finally, it would have to be endorsed by the Civil Service Commissioners, the body which is responsible for the examination and recruitment of entrants to the Service.

We have seen how rarely a man succeeds in running this gauntlet. There is, however, another form of promotion, not from one class to another, but from one grade to another within each class.

In the Administrative Class there are four grades—assistant principals, principals, assistant secretaries and principal assistant secretaries—and, above them, a permanent secretary, who is the Civil Service head of a Ministry, and his deputy.

Promotion from one of these jobs to another is largely dependent on the goodwill of a candidate's superiors. Each year an officer's immediate chief draws up a confidential report saying whether the officer is above, below, or at the average of his grade. These reports are sent either to a board of the department's senior officers who have the job of recommending men for promotion to the head of the Ministry, or they are sent direct to the head of the Ministry, and by him used as a guide for promotion when vacancies occur.

The officer's immediate chief, the board of senior officers and the head of the Ministry himself have all been in the Service for anything from ten to thirty years. They have become set in the routine ways of the Service. The qualities which they will tend to look for in candidates for promotion will not necessarily be those which help him to keep on top of the changing needs of the country he serves, but rather those which help him to fit into the polished grooves of a long-established system.

Mr W. J. Brown, M.P., secretary of the Civil Service Clerical Association, once wrote that if men of the capabilities of Winston Churchill and Beaverbrook had ever been able to pass the entrance exams into the Civil Service they would both either have been flung out again at an early age or would have been forced into some backwater where they could do no harm.

The other forceful personality in the Cabinet today, Mr Ernest Bevin, could not, because of his lack of formal education, have got any job higher than that of a manager of a local Labour Exchange and, most probably, he would never have risen beyond the post of messenger or porter. Whereas, of course, most other members of the Cabinet would have risen to great heights.

## 6.

The reason why the present system of recruitment and promotion, of training and cautious working, is maintained is to be found in the purpose which the Civil Service was originally intended to perform.

The Service was framed in 1855, when Commissioners were first appointed to regulate conditions of entry. At that time, industrialists had little need of State intervention. Indeed, they feared it. The expansion period of capitalism was at its height, and a strong, efficient government machine might prove a check on profitable enterprise. Mainly because the scandals of the Crimean War had caused a public outcry that threatened even more drastic reforms, the ruling class had consented to a revision of the machinery of government; but it took good care to devise a machine which did only what it was told to do.

The new machine was not even intended to advise. In his evidence before the Hume Committee of 1851-52, the chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue said that when Sir Robert Peel framed his revolutionary income-tax proposals in 1842 he had not once consulted the Board. Ten years later he could still tell the Select Committee on Income Tax: "It is not my province to advise on the principle of the income tax, but merely to carry it out."

This applied equally well to all departments of the Civil Service. They were there to carry out orders. But, be-

cause of the *laissez-faire* industrialist's distaste for control, which, since the seventeenth century, had shown itself in fear and jealousy of the Crown, their powers to carry them out were rigidly and deliberately controlled.

Chief of these controls was that the executive's every act was, and still is, subject to Parliamentary scrutiny, aimed to prevent it from setting up as an organisation so strong and so independent that it could defy the interests of the ruling class as represented in Parliament.

To this end, Parliament not only regulates the amount of money voted to the executive, but also specifies for what purposes the money voted shall be spent, and goes to great pains to see that money voted for one purpose is not used for another.

It had been found, for example, that in days gone by money voted for the maintenance of the fleet had in fact been used by Charles II for the maintenance of Nell Gwynn. This threatened not only the safety of the realm, but also the independence of the ruling class. For while Charles might be content to spend Parliamentary money on mistresses, one of his successors might spend it on buying up the Parliamentary Opposition, and so ejecting the party in power.

Therefore Parliament votes money, not en bloc, but piecemeal—so much for the Army, so much for the Navy, so much for the social services. More, it splits up and again subdivides these various heads. Money for the Army is split into fifteen votes.

Vote one is for Pay. That vote in turn is split into eleven different categories, and elaborate machinery has been set up to see that money voted for a particular category is in fact spent there.

The Treasury has power by Act of Parliament to compel each department to present its accounts in a particular form. An accounting officer is appointed to each department to see that the accounts are presented on time and that there has been no expenditure without authority from Parliament.

Even if all the money voted for one category has not been spent, the surplus cannot be spent on another category without permission from the Treasury, and it is part of the

Comptroller and Auditor-General's duty to see that Treasury permission for such a switch has been obtained and why.

Even when the accounts have been passed by the accounting officer in a department, by the Treasury and by the Comptroller and Auditor-General, they are still scrutinised by the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons, which has power to cross-examine the accounting officer or any other official.

This close Parliamentary control, then, is the reason why Civil Servants are cautious in what they do and in what they spend. At any time they may be required to show not only that what they did or what they spent was justified but also that it was authorised.

The result is that colonels in this war, though trusted by their military chiefs with the lives of a thousand men, are not trusted by Civil Service officials with a ten-pound note.

A colonel cannot even buy a pen-nib for the use of a regiment—unless, of course, he uses his own money. Whatever stationery the regiment needs has to be obtained direct from the Stationery Office.

One regiment, urgently needing office paper, applied four times in seven weeks to the Stationery Office without getting its paper. A lorry was then sent to London in charge of an officer who had instructions not to come back without the paper. When he arrived in the Kingsway he had to join a queue of fifty-seven other lorries, all on the same errand.

Of course, the delay in sending the paper may rightly be blamed on the Civil Service. But Civil Servants are not responsible for the fact that a colonel of a regiment has no funds to buy his own paper when the need is urgent.

The blame for that is Parliament's, which decrees that money shall only be spent on the purposes for which it is voted and makes stationery a Civil, not an Army vote.

This clearly wastes a great deal of time. Sometimes, curiously enough, it also wastes money. For when money has been doled out for a particular job, the Civil Service sometimes spends that money, even though the job has become unnecessary, rather than face all the minute-writing,

despatch of memoranda and personal explanations to show why money once needed is now unnecessary.

An official in the Ministry of Food found that his section was growing rapidly. He further found that the noise of typewriters in the section disturbed others who were working in the same room. So he decided to have a partition set up to screen the typists from the rest, and applied to the Office of Works.

Nothing happened for six weeks, and by that time the section had grown so much that it was having to move to another room. Two days before the removal, Office of Works men arrived to put up the partition, and were told that it was no longer required. The foreman then went back to the Office of Works, leaving his men behind. Half an hour later he returned with instructions that a partition had been authorised and a partition must be put up. Put up it was.

## 7.

Parliamentary control is, too, the reason why Civil Servants "run to paper". Civil Servants have to face the periodic inspections of accounts by their department's accounting officer, by the Treasury, by the Comptroller and Auditor-General or by the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons.

More, at every session of Parliament 10,000 questions and 10,000 supplementary questions are asked by M.P.s. The questions may be about something that happened the week before or the year before. The Minister who has to answer them must have the exact facts on which his department based its action or its attitude; and for that reason when a departmental official has to make a decision he writes down every relevant fact or opinion for future reference and puts what he has written into the files.

These vast files are not only kept to answer the queries of the public or of M.P.s in the House of Commons. As records of what was done in the past they provide guides for what can be done in the present.

Parliament, as we have seen, intended the Civil Service to do what it was told, but, because of the increasing detail in the work of Government, it could not give exact instruc-

tions to fit every case. Many times, therefore, a Civil Servant has to make a decision without having any express Parliamentary authority to guide him. So he searches for precedents to show, if necessary, that what he does today was in fact done, without disapproval by Parliament, last year or last century. One of his first moves, then, in taking a decision is to send for the records, and his last move, after taking it, is to add his own decision, with the reasons for it, to those records.

## 8.

The ruling class's determination to keep the executive weak has thus deliberately imposed certain limitations on the Civil Service. These limitations have produced characteristics in the Service and in the Servants which, whether deliberately intended or not, are proving great handicaps to efficiency now that the work of the machine has grown and changed.

Because of the necessity both to write memoranda and to consider precedents, the machine itself moves slowly.

Because they may have to answer to Parliament or to their superiors for every decision they take, Civil Servants become timid, either passing the buck to a colleague or, if this is not feasible, delaying the decision until every possible Parliamentary come-back has been considered and met.

Because of their duty to make decisions in accordance either with direct Parliamentary instructions or with the indirect sanction of precedent, Civil Servants hesitate to initiate, and tend to stick rigidly to established rules of thumb, however much circumstances may have changed.

This means that initiation is put off so long that when the Orders in Council, devised by Civil Servants, do finally reach the Parliamentary table they are out of date. It also means that their tenour is guided not so much by what is right as by what is safe, in the light of Parliamentary rule and precedent.

Such characteristics slow down peace-time progress. They are quite incompatible with a war-winning machine in the twentieth century. But they are to a great extent inevitable in a machine which was originally created to be,

and is still looked on as, the servant, and not even the colleague, of the ruling class, acting through Parliament.

How disastrous this is can be seen from the fact that even in peace-time the work of government had become so immense that Parliament could cope with only a fraction of it. Of all the legislation enacted, nine-tenths was in the form of Orders in Council. In other words, though the Civil Service has now continuously to initiate, it has to use machinery expressly designed to make initiation impossible.

## 9.

What is the remedy for this?

Some Civil Servants try on their own account to get round the slowness of their machine and the limitations of their own experience. But it often happens that when they do so, the confusion is worse than before. "Red tape in a Government department", said Richard Law, the Under-Secretary for War, to the House of Commons on March 6, 1941, "is purgatory: but a Government department without red tape would be just plain hell."

Here are two instances of what he meant.

At the beginning of 1939 the Ministry of Health began to make arrangements for evacuation, and at the end of May it asked the Office of Works to get tenders for 50,000 wooden beds.

Thirty-two firms sent in tenders, but the Office of Works then decided that a folding bed with a metal frame would be more suitable, and fresh tenders were invited. Eventually 100,000 of these beds were ordered. In August 100,000 of the original wooden beds were ordered as well.

Then war broke out, and it was decided that a far greater number of beds would be needed than had originally been contemplated.

It was at this point that an official in the Ministry of Health decided that he would have to cut through red tape. He had seen how long it had taken the usual channels to make up their minds about tenders and to get delivery of the beds. Since war had broken out and at any moment the beds might be urgently needed, he decided to by-pass the usual channels, and went to talk things over with a friend.

The friend offered to design a new bed, and suggested two firms who might be able to manufacture it. The new design was modified by the Office of Works, and contracts were then placed with the two suggested firms.

Subsequently, according to the Select Committee's Sixth Report, the friend asked these two firms to pay him commission, and an employee of the friend "appears to have represented to other firms that he could get them contracts from the Ministry of Health and suggested that he should receive a commission for his trouble".

One firm, at least, agreed to pay this commission, but in fact no commission was paid, because, eventually, the directors of the firm "were not satisfied as to the propriety of the transaction".

It is true that the official of the Ministry of Health who broke through red tape did get his beds. But it is probable that he would have got them as quickly using the ordinary procedure once that had been got into working order by the original order; and if he had used that procedure, there would have been no question of public orders being hawked around by private agents and the undesirable results that such hawking may sometimes have.

Undesirable results, avoided in this instance, did actually follow from the actions of another official who decided to cut red tape on his own account.

He decided that the usual channels were too slow for the goods he urgently needed. He therefore began to stamp all his orders Priority One, although he had nothing whatever to do with any priority committee.

The result was that priority committees in his own and other Ministries found orders of which they knew nothing being hurried through at the expense of orders which they considered more urgent; and what plans they had were to that extent upset.

Because they are not trained to experiment, because they do not know the workings of the business and industrial world with which they must nowadays deal almost daily, present Civil Servants do better to stick to the routine they know than fly to others that they know not of.

One Civil Servant recently sent off on envelope marked

"Most Secret". Inside was another envelope, also marked "Most Secret". Inside that was a note saying: "Most Secret Paper No. 12345/XYZ/000 may now be considered no longer secret." Better to stick to that procedure than to leave most confidential documents in taxi-cabs, which seems to be the Civil Servant's only alternative.

#### 10.

Lord Beaverbrook, too, tried his own methods of putting life into the Civil Service.

*He harried his Civil Servants.* The quiet of a Sunday afternoon was often shattered by the entrance of the Minister, wanting something—and the Civil Servants who could give it him were taking the day off.

Immediately telephones were set ringing in peaceful homes, and, minutes later, worried-looking, middle-aged gentlemen were seen jumping into trains and making for town from Hayward's Heath, Beaconsfield and other places where the higher Civil Service rears its families.

By the time they arrived, of course, the Minister had left. But his spirit remained. Even today, towards five o'clock any afternoon, elderly fathers of families can be seen looking anxiously at their watches and out into the corridor wondering if they may risk going home.

*Lord Beaverbrook also by-passed his Civil Servants.* On the executive of his Supply Council when he was at the Ministry of Supply there were only two Civil Servants. The rest were industrialists he brought in—some of them excellent, at least two of them neither able nor honest.

He employed an industrialist, too, as a sort of Gestapo-cum-revivalist, to keep in close touch with the workings of each section of the Ministry, so that if a Civil Servant told the Minister that something could not be done, the Minister had ready-made, well-informed arguments on his desk showing how it could be done.

He also had his Gestapo for dealing with industrialists outside the Ministry—though he did his own beating up. Every week the figures of production from each Ministry of Supply factory were laid before the Minister, and if any factory was below its quota, Beaverbrook was on the 'phone to it immediately wanting to know why.

Some of this technique was quite effective. The industrialists, for the first time in their lives, found themselves dealing with a Ministry that really kept in touch with what they were doing, handing out praise as well as blame. They liked that and worked the better for it.

Though some of the older Civil Servants were reduced to nervous jellies or looked on their chief with contempt as an old show-off, many of the younger men respected and worked better for a man who set a goal for himself and bust his way through anything to it.

But by-pass and harry though he might, Beaverbrook, like the other Ministers, had still to work in part with the established system; and the established system does not work well with the new world.

### III.

So long as the country was dominated by a ruling class which wanted *laissez faire*, it was inevitable that we should have an impotent State machine. It made sure that there should be no interference with profit-making, it acted as a convenient brake on reformist legislation.

It is only since the ruling class has begun to abandon *laissez faire* in favour of monopoly trusts that it has begun to alter the State machine and set up, as we shall see in a later chapter, bodies such as the Iron and Steel Federation. These are the new models of State organisation, designed to make the State machine a speedier and more effective agent of the interests of the ruling class.

This process has only begun, and so the ruling class and the people as a whole are still saddled in this total war with a machine which in the main was designed to meet the needs of *laissez faire*.

When eventually the Civil Service has been adapted to the changed needs of the ruling class, it is certain that control over the Service will be greatly diminished in the interests of speed and efficiency.

This might have advantages for the ruling class, but it will certainly have the great disadvantage, for ordinary people, that what little check there can be today on the activities of big industrialists will be diminished or entirely removed.

In the interests of the ordinary worker in this country, as long as there is division between people and government, between workers and owning class, checks on the executive will be essential.

The only way in which it will be possible to diminish these checks, and so speed up the workings of the machine without menacing the liberties of ordinary people, will be so to organise our community that the State machine becomes no longer an agent for the interests of a particular class in conflict with the rest of the community, but a channel through which the well-being of the whole people flows. But that is for a later chapter.

## CHAPTER SIX

THE THIRD great complaint against Civil Servants is that they are incapable of doing the jobs which war has thrust upon them.

In peace-time the War Office, for example, had to spend about £45,000,000 annually, but after it had met its usual charges it had only some £3,000,000 left over for new developments. The planning and execution of a programme to cover this relatively small sum did not strain the War Office machine nor overload its officials.

But since war broke out, its responsibilities and the work of the whole Civil Service have been immeasurably increased.

### I.

The Service, as we have seen, has become a trading organisation whose work is incomparably greater and more complicated than that of any trading organisation this country has ever known. And it has to do its work, not with methodical leisure, but amid all the urgency of war.

Some of the things it has to produce or acquire are "capital" goods, such as armament works, barracks and airdromes, most of which can be built to a pattern that is reasonably standard.

Some are "consumption" goods, such as ammunition, airplanes and guns. Of these consumption goods some,

such as ammunition, may also be of standard pattern, but others, notably airplanes, need to be continually changed, with all the problems of research, experiment and prototypes that that entails.

Of the goods that are produced, the Government has to arrange to consume all of some, such as arms, while of others, such as clothing, it will need only a part, leaving the remainder for private consumption.

The production or acquisition of these products, whether they are capital or consumption, whether the Government is to consume the whole or only a part, sets Civil Servants problems which vary from product to product.

*They have to consider quality.* Some products must be of the very highest quality if life is not to be unnecessarily endangered or efficiency impaired. Such, for example, are the vital parts of airplane engines. In others, insistence on the highest quality might waste material and skill. Such, for example, are the caps for airplane petrol tanks.

*They have to consider quantity.* For some products, such as ammunition, the demand will be almost unlimited. For others, such as rifles, the demand will rise steadily to a peak while the Services are being built up and will then fall to a replacement level. The Civil Servant has to plan ahead, so that plant which at one moment is fully occupied producing rifles can later on be switched over to other production, and he must also have plans to switch it back again to rifles if some disaster and loss of equipment increases the demand above the expected replacement needs.

*They have to consider speed of output.* Overloading of a plant will tire the workers and lead to inevitable absenteeism, and hence to waste. Underloading will take the edge off a worker's keenness and cause at least equal waste. Civil Servants must plan to maintain a steady flow of production, and do this for a vast number of interlocking products to ensure that parts, made perhaps in widely separated factories, reach the assembly plant in neither greater nor lesser quantities than are required. And all this must be done with air raids possibly interrupting production and interfering with transport.

*They have to consider cost,* both the money cost and the real cost.

In dealing with the money cost they are without the normal guide of competitive price, because competition has been virtually eliminated, either by arrangements among producers or by the fact that all plants have become full up with work. They therefore have to fall back on intricate calculations in cost accounting, and work out contracts allowing a reasonable profit, permitting a reasonable charge for overhead expenses, leaving sufficient elasticity to meet changes in labour costs.

In considering real costs they have to attempt surveys which have barely been tried before under a capitalist system and to work out which products are most needed and on which, therefore, it is most worth while spending the available labour, raw materials and plant.

*Finally, they have to consider labour, raw materials and plant,* seeing that they are available in sufficient quantities at the right time. Altogether, they are given a job which would frighten a combination of Henry Ford, Lord Beaverbrook and Old Moore.

## 2.

Most Ministries set about this task with exactly the same methods that they had been accustomed to use in peace, methods which had allowed the War Office, for example, to spend three years in deciding how the electricity supply in the Aldershot area could best be safeguarded against air or other attack.

The War Office had been used to issuing its contracts through a department run by the Director of Army Contracts and seventy-eight Civil Servants. This department had a big job. It had, for example, to send out some 50,000 tender-forms a year. All tenders had to be in by a fixed day, when they were opened by the Tender Board, and the most suitable selected. But though big, it was well within the powers of the department until the approach of war necessitated a huge expansion of the Army. Then the department was swamped and its organisation fell to pieces.

With the passing of the Conscription Act, a militia-camp-building programme was launched on May 26, 1939. The programme was to be completed by October 1, and was to cost £21,000,000, or seven times as much as would

normally be spent in the whole of one year on new developments. The work was both delayed and badly done.

The first notable point was that little or no preliminary work, such as acquisition of sites and surveying, was carried out until the Conscription Bill became law, although preparations for the Bill had been going on for months and its passage had been a certainty. The result of this was that the actual building could not begin until long after the Act was through.

The second notable point was that, because of the pressure of work on a limited number of officials, the preparation of estimates was skimped. Some estimates did not include the cost of levelling the ground, putting in sewage works, garages, petrol tanks, water mains or storage tanks, or building roads, bridges, incinerators or air-raid shelters. The eventual cost of building garages alone at one camp was only slightly less than the original estimate for the whole of the camp.

The following table, taken from the Appendix of the Select Committee's 19th Report, shows how the original estimates for five camps, A to E, were exceeded because of delays, additions after the contracts were signed and rising costs.

Camps:	A	B	C	D	E
Estimate:	100	100	100	100	100
Cost of additional works	100	138	261	174	78
Delays due to weather	12	13	18	15	9
Increased cost of material	12	12	20	15	10
Increased cost of labour	39	70	83	73	43
Final cost	<u>263</u>	<u>333</u>	<u>482</u>	<u>377</u>	<u>240</u>

The final cost of one camp was thus nearly five times the estimate, and the smallest increase on the estimate was 250 per cent.

Higher cost and delays were also caused by the ignorance of the War Office about wage rates. For months they offered rates in the open market which were well below the market level, with the result that they got only incompetent supervisors and there was much bad work, waste and downright cheating.

It was not until October, when the programme was

originally intended to be complete, that the War Office began to offer as much as £8 a week to clerks of works. In the meantime, at least one camp, built at a cost of some £350,000, had had to be pulled down through faulty workmanship and rebuilt.

Clearly the peace-time machinery was inadequate to the war-time job, and eventually all Ministries, including the War Office, were forced to improvise. They then became like lambs among the wolves. One method adopted was to place large orders with a few firms, who were then expected to farm out to smaller firms whatever they could not handle themselves.

This certainly relieved Ministries of a great deal of the work of arranging for production. But it had its dangers.

The firm which originally received the orders tended to hold on to far more than it could do itself in a reasonable time, in order to give its own plant a long and profitable run. Or else it sub-contracted only to firms which it had private reasons for favouring, and which might not be the most efficient available.

In any case, it made a charge, not only to cover its expenses in distributing the contracts, but also to give itself a profit on the work of distribution.

As the firm which obtained the sub-contract made a profit on the work it did, there were, in fact, two profits, one for doing the work and one for having it done, in the final cost of any article produced under this method.

There was a further reason for excessive cost. Many of the articles Ministries were ordering were new, and until the methods of production had been tried out and settled it would not be possible, even with the most accurate cost accounting, to estimate in advance what the cost of the job would eventually be when production became normal.

And there was always the point that most of the articles were urgently needed, and elaborate costing would use up time.

So most Ministries fell back on a system known as cost plus, under which a firm taking a contract was guaranteed its costs in addition to a percentage of the total cost as its profit.

This system has been condemned by everyone who has

studied it except a few of the Civil Servants whose convenience it served and the many contractors and producers whose profits it swelled.

It put a premium on waste, delay and inefficiency. The more a job cost, the higher was the profit which the contractor or producer could claim. Yet although cost plus had been tried in the last war, found wanting and condemned, and other, more efficient methods evolved, back went the Ministries to cost plus—*canis ad vomitum*—when this war broke out, with the War Office well in the lead. It was only after months of war and violent public protest that some Ministries were at last induced to try something different.

The first variation they tried was to have a maximum figure attached to a cost-plus contract. That is to say, that a contractor was paid the whole of his costs, plus a percentage of those costs as profit, provided the total did not exceed a fixed sum.

This was better than simple cost plus, but only slightly. Though it limited the total amount to be spent, it still did little to encourage efficiency, but merely set the contractor a total to aim at.

Better than this was the target-price contract, under which an estimate was made of what the cost of a job would be. If when the job was done the costs were found by the accountants to have been less than this figure, the contractor was allowed to retain a share of the difference. If the costs turned out to be more, the difference came partly or wholly out of the contractor's estimated profit.

This system is a direct inducement to a contractor or producer to get his work through quickly and economically, but it requires expert accounting both before the job is begun and after it is finished, and no Ministry has a sufficient number of accountants capable of doing the work.

### 3.

Nor is any Ministry making full use of experts in other fields than accountancy.

The War Office and Air Ministry, for example, have to acquire and manage land for such things as barrack and

airdrome sites. As long ago as 1882 the Hayter Committee said :

"It is no disparagement to the high reputation of the Corps of Royal Engineers to admit that its officers are necessarily deficient in the technical training and professional experience which are desirable in agents for the management of landed property."

Yet for another twenty-six years its officers were left in sole charge of this work, and well into even this present war, the Air Ministry did not trouble to appoint any land officers to the Balloon Command, which was necessarily spending a great deal of its time in acquiring balloon sites.

This was not because of the great hurry in which the balloon barrage was set up. Sites had been earmarked months before the war, and in June, 1939, the barrage was in a state of war preparedness.

It was, simply, that the Air Ministry officials had not sufficient imagination to realise that the flight and squadron commanders to whom they left the work might not have the time, and almost certainly would not have the experience, to negotiate on the dozens of details involved in acquiring sites.

It was not until October, 1939, that the first land officer was appointed. This appointment was followed by three more, and that was thought sufficient for the whole of the London area.

The result was that many sites were occupied long before the terms of occupation were settled, owners were left for many months without compensation for the loss of their land and, in the end, the Air Ministry often had to pay far more than would originally have been desirable or necessary. By July, 1940, 901 claims by owners for compensation had been settled, but 971 were still under negotiation. And some of the sites selected proved very unsuitable.

The Select Committee in its 16th Report described the history of one site taken over in South-East London by inexperienced officers.

The site was in the grounds of an evacuated College which happened to be in the centre of the flight. So flight headquarters, by permission of the College authorities,

were set up in the College buildings. Squadron headquarters soon followed, until seventy rooms, a gymnasium, fives courts and a pavilion had been occupied.

At this point a bill for £1,000 came in for light and heating, apart from any question of rent or depreciation. When presented with this, the officers concerned said naively that they thought the "College authorities had generously lent the buildings to the Air Ministry", and the Air Ministry naively explained to the College authorities that their squadrons "bounced into places". The result of the tenancy, abruptly terminated at the end of fifteen and a half weeks, was a total bill for £2,200.

Such cost and trouble as this would have been avoided if the Air Ministry had bothered to employ men who, whatever they knew about balloons, at least had expert knowledge of leases, values and land.

But the Civil Service does not think much of experts. The periodic reorganisations of Civil Service classes by the Treasury have ignored entirely the position and functions of specialists in the Service.

For others, wage scales were standardised and the grading simplified, until some 17,000 officers were grouped into no more than twenty-four grades. But the 8,000 specialists were grouped into 120 different grades, and had no fewer than 450 different salary scales.

These scales were invariably lower than for officials doing jobs of corresponding importance in the Administrative Class. The maximum for the head of a professional, scientific or technical department is £2,500 a year, compared with the £3,000 payable to the head of an administrative department; and the Post Office Engineer-in-Chief, with a staff under him of 30,000 and responsibility for running plant valued at £100,000,000, is paid only £2,000 a year.

The Tomlin Commission further reported that as late as 1931 no technician had ever been promoted to an administrative job in the Post Office.

In fact, in every Ministry, the expert, whether he is a scientist with expert knowledge of fertilisers, a doctor with expert knowledge of health, an engineer with expert knowledge of construction or even an ex-business man with

expert knowledge of industrial management, tends to be treated as a necessary hack rather than as a colleague.

Normally, when a Minister needs technical advice he goes for it to the Administrative Class, in which the expert has no place. The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry will pass the request for advice down through his hierarchy until someone, possibly as junior as an assistant principal, comes to the expert and asks his opinion.

The expert writes his opinion as a memorandum, which may well be re-written by everyone concerned except the expert before it is presented to the Minister. The final decision on a technical matter may be taken by the Minister without personally discussing the question with the expert at all.

#### 4.

One offshoot of this Civil Service combination of ignorance of the outside world and contempt for experts who at least know one part of that world thoroughly, has been the attitude of Civil Servants to the Press.

For years, Ministries have been legally compelled to issue certain announcements to the Press. Apart from this, they felt it advisable to make special announcements about, say, the appointment of a new Colonial Governor.

This work of writing, duplicating and sending out formal, stereotyped notices was done by the Parliamentary branch of a Ministry, and once it was done, Ministers felt themselves under no further obligation or necessity to let the public know what the Government was doing or what the Government expected from the public.

Nor was much effort made to see that such notices as were put out did, in fact, get into the papers. The notices were written in a style that no newspaper would use. If they announced a new appointment, they gave the bare name, without any personal details about the previous career, still less of the personality, of the man appointed. And they were put out regardless of edition times.

During the ten years before the war, one Ministry after another did begin to realise that newspapers could be a help, even a vital necessity, to the proper government of the country, instead of merely irresponsible nuisances; and

Press Officers, with a knowledge of newspaper work, were appointed to the establishment. But even today, the most important department of all, the Treasury, is without a Press Officer who can deal with financial as opposed to political questions, and it was not until May, 1940, that one of the next most important departments, the Board of Trade, had any Press Officer at all.

Up to that date the Board of Trade had been content with the dry bones offered to the Press by its Parliamentary branch, and any newspaper man who wanted more had to scrounge for himself.

This usually meant ringing up section after section in the Ministry until he found the man who was actually dealing with the point in question, and this man, though courteous and even anxious to help, did not know how much information he was justified in giving, was always afraid of getting into trouble for giving too much and sometimes ended by giving little that a newspaper would find useful.

The appointment of regular Press Officers who know what sort of facts a newspaper wants, how it wants them presented and the latest time at which it wants to receive them was a great improvement. But it was only a beginning.

Press Officers found that it was one thing to be given a job and another to be allowed to do it properly. They struck, of course, the Civil Service routine as soon as they went in.

One Press Officer, for example, wanted to have a carpet in his office, but was told that only officers who were receiving £1,200 a year were entitled to carpets. "Then pay me £1,200 a year," he said. This was not possible, but the officer was privately advised that if he really wanted a carpet, the thing to do was to induce some other official who was earning £1,200 a year to come in and share his room for a day or two. So the Press Officer got hold of a friendly retired admiral, who sat in his room until the carpet arrived.

The carpet was seriously important in his work. In the Civil Service the status of a Civil Servant is gauged by the salary he receives. A man earning £700 a year will not take orders from another man who is earning £650, and

when Press Officers first began to appear in departments, other officials did not know where to place them in the hierarchy, and were therefore cautious and suspicious.

Shortly after this Press Officer had got his carpet he went to get some information from an official in his Ministry. The official plainly did not know what to make of this new phenomenon. What exactly did he do? How long had he been in the department? What sort of a staff had he under him? The Press Officer answered all these queries.

His job, he said, was to let the papers know what the Ministry was doing and, through the papers, to explain to the public just what new regulations meant to them, what effect they would have on their lives and so on. He had been in the department three months. He had a staff of five.

Still the official was doubtful. "What sort of furniture have you got in your office?" he asked. "I've got five telephones, desks, chairs. And a carpet," said the officer. At once the official's face cleared. "Oh, you've got a carpet, have you?" said he. "What is it that you want to know?"

But it was not only their difficulty in placing the new phenomenon in Civil Service perspective that made Civil Servants suspicious of the new Press Officers. Most important Civil Servants come from a class which looks upon all papers except the *Times* and, for some reason, the *Daily Telegraph*, as being irresponsible rags whose staffs do not care whether what they print is true and are not interested in the serious business of Government work. They could not see how their own work could be anything but hindered by interference from newspapers whose principal concern appeared to be sensations, usually murders and divorces.

So the newly appointed Press Officers at first found the greatest difficulty in getting any news that was fit to print. For example, the Press Section would receive a note from some other section which read like this: "Here is a notice for the Press. 'In Defence Regulation 15, section c, paragraph 2 (b), delete 25 and substitute 15.' Please get this into all papers tomorrow."

This notice might arrive at the Press section about 6 p.m., with all the duplication and despatch to be seen to,

apart from anything else. "Get this into all the papers." As though the Press Officer controlled the lot!

Of course, he sends out no such notice. His first job is to look up the Defence Regulation in question. He finds that the notice actually means that the manufacture of, say, tooth-brushes is to be cut from 20 per cent. of peace-time normal to 15 per cent. Not earth-shaking, perhaps, but of some interest to everyone who still has his own teeth in his head.

He immediately rings up the section who sent the notice. "I see", he says, "that this notice of yours means that there are going to be less tooth-brushes. This will affect an important industry, you know, and will affect the public, too. Don't you think that I had better add a footnote to say what it means?" The official at the other end of the line finally agrees, but insists on seeing the footnote.

Then it is found that the regulation refers only to certain types of tooth-brushes. After long discussion, a notice goes out to the papers explaining in simple words exactly what the change in the regulation will mean. By that time at least one edition of the morning papers may have gone away.

Of course, in time, Civil Servants are taught to see the point, provided the Press Officer himself has tact and a proper knowledge of his job. But it takes some doing.

When a careful and accurate report of a piece of a department's work did appear in the Press, or when a particular Civil Service job was praised, the tactful Press Officers were careful to show it to the Civil Servant concerned, thus making him feel less unkindly to papers in the future.

More, Civil Servants began to find that publication in the Press was essential. For, when traders were prosecuted for not observing a new regulation, some of them pleaded that they had never heard of the regulation until they were prosecuted, and unless the department could show that the regulation had in fact been discussed freely in such and such papers, the judge refused to convict.

Frequently the legal department of a Ministry would ring up the Press section for cuttings showing in just what papers a new regulation had been reported. This still

further decreased the hostility of Civil Servants to the papers.

Such factors as this, coupled with a little honest blackmail—"Well, old man, you know what a muck-up they'll make of it if we don't send out an explanatory notice," or "You know, old man, that we'll get some nasty attacks if we don't treat them right"—have all helped.

Left to itself the Civil Service would have gone on in the old way, ignorant of edition times, indifferent to the need for letting people know, indifferent to the utility of explanation.

Even after the last war, when many people believed not only that the Germans had landed on the Isle of Wight, but had actually sunk it, the Civil Service had not learned the danger of keeping the public in the dark. Not even the danger to the Service itself.

Early in this war an inventor forwarded to the War Office an entirely new device which he believed would provide absolute protection to big cities in air raids. The War Office politely acknowledged the receipt of the blue print and left it at that.

The inventor was furious. He got in touch with the papers and, without giving away the secret of his invention, which would have helped the enemy, satisfied them that he had got an idea that ought to be tested. Next day several papers attacked the obscurantism of the War Office, which was allowing a device which might save the lives of thousands to be buried in red tape.

Actually the device was for a huge steel umbrella which, when a warning sounded, was supposed to open over London. If the War Office had troubled to let the papers know this when they rang up, it would have saved itself from attack and millions of newspaper readers from an unnecessarily despondent feeling about their rulers.

## 5.

Some of the Civil Service hostility to Press Officers was due to the misuse of the function of publicity by some Ministers. Mr Hore Belisha, for example, seemed to them to be using publicity and Press Officers more to make a

name for himself rather than to further the work of his department.

There was a similar feeling about another Cabinet Minister, who made considerable use of an advertising agent who had worked with him in his private business days. This agent was installed in a room at one Ministry, though he did not appear in any list of Press Officers and was not, in fact, paid by the Government.

To this man, with no accepted position in the department and no defined job, the Parliamentary branch was instructed to send all the answers it prepared to Parliamentary questions. The advertising agent sometimes altered the wording or the emphasis of the reply, not always, it seemed, to provide fuller information, but to bring out some news angle providing publicity for the Minister. Such proceedings were ill received by department officials.

But a much more fundamental reason for hostility to Press Officers lies in the upbringing and training of Civil Servants, which leaves them out of touch with the ways of the ordinary world, contemptuous of experts, but unqualified to do an expert job themselves.

At no time do the men who enter the Administrative Class receive training, for example, in the structure, general organisation and day-to-day working of industry.

This Administrative Class was framed to do a particular type of job. It was meant to be the link between the lower grades of the Service, from whom it received facts, and the political Minister, from whom it received orders. Its duty primarily was to give advice, based on facts received from below, to the Minister, and then pass back his decision and see that it was carried out.

For this, men were wanted who could marshall and present facts clearly, gauge their relevance and put them in their proper perspective.

Because many of the men who supplied them with the facts were technicians with, perhaps, no other concern than the technical side of a question, the Administrative Class had to be able to modify and revise technically sound judgements in the light of non-technical considerations.

Because the Minister to whom their advice was given was himself in a sense a casual, unskilled labourer, passing

in and out of office and from one Ministry to another every few years or even months, they had to see that the advice they gave was consistent with policies decided upon and in operation before the Minister took office.

It was their job steadily to apply long and wide views to any question, to give a judgement that was informed in fact and sound within the principles that Parliament had laid down.

To fit men for this job, a particular kind of education was considered desirable. Expert, detailed knowledge of a technical or of any other subject was thought unnecessary. What was wanted was a trained, lay mind which could apply itself to and grasp any subject without being narrowed in its judgement by exact knowledge in a particular field.

That, it was said, was the sort of mind a University education produced. Universities do not encourage textbook cramming. They try to encourage critical faculties by inducing students to work out individual problems for themselves and, so that the student will more readily concentrate on learning methods of approach rather than on merely acquiring information, the material he studies tends to be unconnected with everyday life. Classics, philosophy, ancient history are preferred to studies of modern industrial conditions, economics or modern politics.

Because of the type of examination and the preference of the examiners, out of every 100 entrants into the Class in the eleven years to 1935, thirty-five had studied classics, and twenty-five history which stopped, at the latest, at 1878, against only eight who had studied modern languages, seven who had studied economics and politics and six who had studied mathematics.

After spending their time at school and University, with other students of their own class, they join the Service. "They take their eyes from the second-hand books," says Herman Finer in his *British Civil Service*, "and open them again on the dog's-eared files." All this tends to make them ignorant of the modern conditions with which they will have to cope, and sympathetic to the ideas of one particular class:

Some departments, notably the Treasury, do now send their new recruits to serve in other departments before they enter the Treasury itself. This gives them a little knowledge at least of the rest of the Service. But in the majority of Ministries the recruits are merely sent round the different sections in the Ministry to which they are appointed. They are placed under the tutelage of a senior official, and by him taught the ways of the department.

Neither recruits to the Treasury nor recruits to any other department are thus given a chance of learning about the outside world, except through the reports of others. They come straight from good homes and the more expensive Universities, they are trained by men of similar origin and similar remoteness from the day-to-day struggles of ordinary people, and they spend the rest of their lives with people whose upbringing, experience and outlook are the same as their own.

## 6.

One of the most striking examples of this is the Foreign Office. John Bright once said: "England's foreign policy is nothing more nor less than a gigantic system of outdoor relief for the aristocracy of Great Britain." Until 1880 all recruits to the diplomatic service were chosen personally by the Foreign Secretary; until 1919 no one could sit for the examination established in 1880 unless he was personally known to the Foreign Secretary or "recommended to him by men of standing and position on whom the Foreign Secretary could rely and who knew the candidate personally".

This test, already sufficient to keep all but a very narrow circle from conducting their country's foreign affairs, was reinforced by an income test which laid down that every candidate must possess private means of at least £400 a year. The income test remained until 1919 because the Treasury, "for reasons of economy", refused to abolish it when it was asked to by the Ridley Commission in 1890.

Even today, candidates must first satisfy a Selection Board before they can sit for the examination, and there is at least a tendency for the Board to give undue weight to such social considerations as accent and manners.

If the bulk of Britain's people were not kept out of the Foreign Office by such considerations as these, they would still be kept out by the type of examination, similar in subject-matter and quality to the Home Service examination, which they would be required to pass.

In consequence, the Foreign Office today is still as much the preserve of the aristocracy as it was in Bright's day. In all the years from 1851 to 1929, 53 per cent. of the recruits to the Foreign and Diplomatic Service each year came from the aristocracy or gentry, 22 per cent. came from the professional classes and only 4 per cent. from business families. Apparently, a working-class boy has never got inside the Foreign Office except once—as Foreign Secretary.

Apart from a few who were educated privately, all the officials today come from public schools, more than one half come from eleven of the best-known schools and more than one-third come from Eton.

Even in more leisurely days, nice manners, a good brain and an Eton and Oxford education were not sufficient qualifications for the conduct of our relations with other countries. Even then it was necessary to understand the forces which were shaping both this country and others, and neither then nor now were Foreign Office officials given the opportunity to acquire this understanding.

They know, intimately, only one very narrow section of their own country. If they go abroad, they tend to mix with other diplomats and with the circles of Government officials in the countries they visit. Even when they get to know working-class leaders they never come to understand the feelings of ordinary working-class men.

Their contacts are official. Unofficial movements, such as the Nazi Party's rise in Germany, tend to catch them unawares; and even when they do become aware of an unofficial movement, they seldom have the knowledge or training to understand what are the social and economic causes behind it or to forecast its probable result.

Today, more than ever, we need men in the Foreign Service who can get into the heart of a country and really understand why it tends to act as it does. But instead we are served by men who have never got beneath the veneer,

even of their own country, and who are usually unable, and sometimes even unwilling, to get into the roots of a country that is entirely foreign to them. What is true of the Foreign Office is almost equally true of every other Ministry.

7.

One remedy tried has been the new model of Government organisation referred to in the preceding chapter.

In the past thirty years, the changing needs of the industrial ruling class have wiped out the rugged individualism of the last century and called for the conception of controlled planning.

This planning has taken the form of the elimination of competition and the establishment of monopolies whose plan is to maintain or increase private profit.

Because the monopolists needed the power of the State to enforce their monopoly, they have had to make use of State machinery. But because the existing State machinery was cumbersome and was, moreover, subject to interference by Parliament; and because Parliament, with the increase since the last war in the Labour representation, might not always be controlled by the industrial ruling class, new forms of State machinery have been devised. Such are the Central Electricity Board, the London Passenger Transport Board, the Port of London Authority and the British Broadcasting Corporation.

This last is not a profit-making body, but its form of organisation may well be copied by other bodies that are.

These organisations, in peace-time, were free from the necessity of meeting daily Parliamentary criticism. No Minister could speak in the Commons for the B.B.C., the head of the Central Electricity Board is not a Minister but a business man appointed by the Government.

The Government can lay down general lines of policy, the bodies must present annual reports and accounts to a Minister. But otherwise they are free to carry out their work without investigation either by Public Accounts Committees, or by Select Committees of the House of Commons, or by individual members, or by shareholders.

That means that they can eliminate much of the cum-

bersome routine of minutes and memoranda that afflicts an ordinary Ministry, they can make their decisions more quickly, without regard to precedents or rules laid down by some other authority for some other circumstances, and can make their decisions without regard to their effect on voters.

This makes for greater efficiency in the business sense, but it also makes for another thing dear to the business man—*independence to do what he likes*.

In fact, through the machinery found in these so-called semi-public bodies, the business man gets the best of all worlds.

He has behind him the authority and the prestige of the State, but is hampered by little or no State control; and he is free and independent to run his concern on *laissez-faire* lines without having to meet the competition of other *laissez-faire* rivals.

While the business man thus gets the best, the consumer may well get the worst of all worlds. He misses such safeguards on prices and services as the competition in *laissez faire* can give, without getting the conscious national planning that should accompany State control.

The planning that he does get is planning for the elimination of small competitors and the share-out of profits among a few large producers.

It has resulted in the closing of shipyards under the National Shipbuilders' Security, the closing of cement works under the Cement Manufacturers' Association, the closing of cotton mills under the Surplus Spindles Board and the closing of coal-mines under the Coal-Mines Re-organisation Commission.

None of these bodies is exactly parallel to, say, the B.B.C., the Transport Board or the Central Electricity Board in its form of organisation. But these last three are much nearer to being the models of Civil Service organisation which the industrial ruling class is now trying to build up than are the old-established Ministries; and their influence can be clearly seen in the war organisation which is being developed in industry itself and linked to the Civil Service in privately owned but State-backed monopolies.

Here is a typical example of the new model.

The British Iron and Steel Federation was set up in 1934 at a time when the steel industry was nearly at its lowest point. Production had fallen off sharply in the 1931 slump, and had not recovered. Individual producers were fighting each other by price-cutting for what market remained, and profits were negligible.

To remedy this the Government had been induced to impose a tariff on imports, and "in consideration for" this aid, the industry was told to reorganise itself on a more efficient basis.

Actually, this "consideration" was, in fact, as much desired by the leading steel producers as tariffs had been. For it enabled them to set up a body, with strong coercive powers, to put an end to the price-cutting which was wiping out the profits of the industry and, possibly, to eliminate redundant rivals.

For this, the only price they had to pay was to accept a Government nominee, Sir Andrew Duncan, as chairman of the controlling body, the British Iron and Steel Federation.

No doubt the new chairman was anxious to consider other interests than those merely of the steel producers themselves. But, however public-spirited the chairman might be, he was necessarily and inevitably guided by the advice of experts who knew the industry better than he did. That is, he was guided by the big industrialists who formed the dominating membership of the Federation.

This machinery has been taken over virtually intact in war, so that the British Iron and Steel Federation has become the British Iron and Steel Control. The principal change is that Sir Andrew Duncan has moved into the Government and his place has been taken by a steel-maker, Sir Charles Wright, who is now the Controller.

The theory behind this new model is one of dual control, under which general directions are issued to an industry by the Government, but these general directions are interpreted and translated into technical terms, and the details filled in, by men who are in the industry itself and have authority over it.

The Ministry of Supply, surveying the needs of the country, has to decide how much steel is required. The steel industry has to produce that steel. As liaison officer between the industry and the Ministry is the Controller, Sir Charles Wright, who, because he has been a steel-maker all his life, knows the technical details of the steel industry and, because he was Steel Controller in the last war, knows also the workings of the Civil Service mind and system.

He can translate Civil Service aspiration into technical terms that the industry will understand. He can advise the Ministry when, in the interests of efficient production, particular instructions ought to be modified. When, for example, the Ministry wishes to call for the production of a certain number of tanks a week, the Controller, because his organisation has exact knowledge of the production capacity and raw materials supplies of the industry, can tell the Ministry whether the tank figure is above or below the production capacity of the industry.

Once the Minister of Supply has decided on the figure at which tanks are produced, presumably after consultation with the Steel Control, the necessary order for steel is given to Sir Charles Wright, and by him to Mr George Briggs, the Secretary of the Iron and Steel Control Tank Committee. Mr Briggs then calls a meeting of the directors of all sections of the steel industry which are concerned with steel required for tanks, and this meeting may further call in representatives of the individual firms most concerned.

These firms will be told what are the Government requirements and the dates at which successive deliveries are to be made. They will be allocated orders in accordance with their available capacity. When these orders have been given, the remaining requirements will be met by going through the list of producers and issuing contracts wherever a firm is found that has plant not otherwise fully occupied.

Then the Control will approach the Burleigh Committee at the Ministry of Supply, which has the job of co-ordinating tank production, and will ask for details of the places at which the steel is to be delivered on the stated dates.

That information will be passed on to all the producers turning out the 160 to 200 different types of steel necessary for the production of one tank. If delivery is not made on the due date, it is the Burleigh Committee's job to ask why.

All that, at any rate, is the theory.

By this machinery it has been possible to work the dual control, double harness of big business and the State machine without a catastrophe to either or both.

It is not the type of machinery that Socialism would call for.

It still leaves the private manufacturer with power to sabotage the national plan, if only by insisting, as an expert, that the plan is unworkable.

The profit-making motive is still left dominant, and the right of owners of money to take tribute out of industry without working for it is unimpaired.

But as an expedient for a country caught with a privately owned system at a time when the national concentration of every resource is imperative, the system is better than rampant individualism or wool-bound Whitehall.

For, besides giving some measure of planning and control, it still leaves room for individual initiative, and so avoids the deadhandedness of a Civil Service system which was not designed to make its control enterprising.

Some of the most notable examples of this enterprise circumventing official negation have been in salvage. The British Iron and Steel Corporation is a private body of the industry, and is under the control of, but not a part of, the Iron and Steel Control. It has set up an offshoot of its own, called British Iron and Steel Corporation (Salvage), Ltd.

This organisation, of its own initiative, has procured thousands of tons of scrap for the country which would have been lost if Government departments had had their way.

On one occasion a sunk ship of 14,000 tons, which the Admiralty had given up for lost and which had been taken off Lloyd's List, was actually raised by the Corporation, at its own expense and risk, with the help of a tug which, earlier still, had also been sunk, given up as lost by the Admiralty and raised by the Corporation.

Another very large ship which might cost millions to replace was sunk. The Admiralty was told that the cost of raising her would be £40,000 and her back might be broken in the process, which would mean the loss of the ship and of the £40,000. The Admiralty wrote her off as lost, and was almost angry when the Corporation on its own initiative proceeded to raise the ship after all.

9.

Not all the controls are operated even as efficiently as this. The Cotton Control, for example, has been unsatisfactory. The controllers of other industries, being themselves drawn from those industries, have been suspected, with reason, of favouring the firms from which they came.

And even where the control is efficient and works smoothly with the Civil Service, it still falls short of the combination of methodical planning and concentrated energy which is necessary to organise fully the great resources of this country.

Planning, in fact, is still infantile. Not until a full year after the outbreak of war was there any attempt at a full survey of the country's production capacity. Where bodies, such as the Production Committee, were set up to decide how production resources should be allocated, they were not given power to make their decisions effective. For long, Government ministries competed with each other for the same products, forcing up the price and preventing each other from getting adequate supplies.

Though things are now better, we will never get real planning from the present hotch-potch.

There are some Civil Servants, trained in the old ways, who are fully able to cope with the new problems. There are many others who are given the job of trying to cope with these new problems, but, by reason of their training and the limits of their experience, are incapable.

Beside them are the experts, knowing the technical details of their job, but ignorant of administration, and the business men brought into the service for war-time duty, knowing their particular industry, but ignorant of Civil Service difficulties or procedure.

The result is not happy. Too many men knowing the

details of industry are being handicapped by having to work with and in a system of which they know nothing. Too many men, knowing the Civil Service system well, are being handicapped by having to apply it to work for which it is not fitted and of which they are themselves ignorant, and by having to work alongside men who despise them and whom they themselves despise.

Even if we recruit and train the planners in the way suggested in Chapter Four, we will still not get concerted planning, until we bring the whole of industry under public control and ownership.

For while industry remains in private hands it is still possible for the individual owners, like the drop forgers, for example, to refuse to extend their plant because "it would upset the balance of production after the war".

First get your control over industry, then train your planners, and then you will be able to use your country's resources to the full.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

FOURTH AND perhaps greatest complaint of all made against the Civil Service is its lack of organisation. Firms which do Government work are not able to deal with just one section within a Ministry, nor even with one Ministry. They are bundled about from section to section and from Ministry to Ministry, and sometimes have to spend as much time finding out the official who is really responsible for them as they do in producing the order.

### I.

For example, a bombed firm wanted timber for repairs. It applied to the Timber Control (Area No. 5) in Tavistock Square, and was given the usual forms to be filled in in triplicate. One copy was sent, by instruction, to the Ministry of Health.

After a week, since there had been no reply, one of the directors called at the Ministry, and was told that the application was being considered.

Later, the Ministry wrote to say that the application had been sent to the Housing Inspector to see if he could approve the amount required.

Still later, the Ministry wrote to say that, after all, the application had now been sent to the Priority Officer, War Office (F.W. 1a), "to which department the subject would appear to appertain".

Since the Service has not fully learned the art of publicity, it is often extremely difficult for an outsider to know with which Ministry he should deal. But there seems no reason why the Service itself should not know which section is responsible for what. Yet this firm's experience in its search for timber is not peculiar.

Here, in diary form, is the experience of a farmer who was trying to carry out the orders of the Government.

1940.

*May.* County War Agricultural Committee orders him to plough 150 acres of pasture. He has from 100 to 120 acres already in cultivation.

*July-August.* Because he has not sufficient storage capacity to house the product of the newly ploughed land, he asks the Committee to pass his application for two barns and two covered ways.

*Sept.* Committee approves application and promises to send licence on receipt of the plans, estimates, etc.

*Oct. 16.* Farmer gets plans and estimates from three contractors and submits them to the Committee.

*Oct. 31.* Committee approves plans and estimates, but tells farmer that its authority has now been withdrawn and he must apply to the Ministry of Agriculture.

*Nov. 1.* Farmer asks for his plans back.

*Nov. 5.* Committee telephones it has mislaid plans. Farmer gets copies, submits them to the Ministry of Agriculture.

*Nov. 21.* Ministry inquires why two barns are needed, and later tells farmer he will have to apply to the Ministry of Supply. Lengthy correspondence follows.

*Dec. 2.* One of the three original contractors telephones farmer that he has received a licence to proceed with two barns, and asks if these barns are for the farmer.

*Dec. 9.* Farmer, unable to confirm that barns are really for him, confirms order.

*Dec.-Jan.* Six officials call at different times to ask if barns are really necessary. Farmer says yes. This satisfies each official, who does not inspect site or attempt to check information given by the farmer.

1941.

*Jan.* Contractor 'phones he cannot deliver because of the weather. A week later he 'phones that he cannot get transport. A week later still he 'phones that he cannot get the material. On the same day he delivers half a ton of girders to the farm.

*Jan. 16.* Ministry of Supply sends authority to farmer for one barn and three tons of steel. The steel is not delivered.

*Jan. 20.* Ministry sends formal written licence, but adds that this does not mean that steel is available or that, if available, it will be delivered.

*Feb. 25.* Farmer receives authority to rebuild a grain store which he had not asked for and a licence for 9 tons of steel which he does not receive.

*March 1.* Contractor 'phones he will complete delivery in a week. Same day Ministry of Supply 'phones farmer to send copies of his original application and plans and to state what they are for and whether they are necessary.

*March 3.* For third time farmer gets full copies of plans and estimates, forwards them to Ministry. They are not acknowledged.

*March 12.* Contractor promises delivery of materials within a week and erection immediately after.

*June 9.* Contractor finishes job.

Such proceedings would have been understandable 200 years ago, when, instead of a Civil Service, there was only a collection of servants who were ignorant of each other's work, and jealous of each other's powers. In 1750, when the Board of Trade wrote asking the Admiralty to provide ships to take settlers to Nova Scotia, the Admiralty replied that they would be pleased to attend to the matter when requested to do so by a body

which had the right to express the King's pleasure. As late as 1852 applicants for patents complained that their applications had to pass through nine different stages in seven different parts of the town at a distance from one another, and the complainants added, "At all these stages fees were exacted".

But it is astonishing today, when all Ministries are part of one Service, and when the system in that Service is to carry consultation to an extreme extent, that the identical evils of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries should still persist.

Ministries compete with each other in the open market to buy the same products. Until well into this war, mugs and plates for the Army were bought by the Ministry of Supply in competition with the Office of Works, which was buying mugs and plates for the R.A.F.

One Ministry will take action which affects another Ministry without letting that Ministry know.

The Ministry of Aircraft Production, for example, issued a great Press appeal for garage mechanics to enrol for aircraft work. The appeal was brilliantly successful, in that, the very next day, thousands of garage hands appeared at their local Labour Exchanges to sign on. But the Labour Exchanges were not ready for them, and told them to come back later. The Ministry of Aircraft Production had told the Press and, through the Press, the garage hands. But apparently it had failed to tell the Ministry of Labour.

Inside individual Ministries one department will act without consulting another that is vitally concerned.

For example, indenting branches, which draw up the list of things their Ministries want to buy, will sometimes draw up their lists without consulting the contracts branches, who are responsible for the actual buying. This means that the contracts branch is sometimes given an order to buy something which it knows, through its previous contacts with producers, is unobtainable. Before drawing up its list, the indenting branch, which is not in direct touch with the markets, should consult the contracts branch, which is, and so avoid the unnecessary delay or cost which comes from demanding something which is unobtainable or scarce.

One reason for this lack of cohesion arises directly from the war. Because the work of Ministries inevitably overlaps, liaison committees were set up in peace-time. One was the Contracts Co-ordinating Committee, which was set up in 1920 to "secure economy in purchases, elimination of competition between the three services where the market is restricted and the adoption of a uniform contract procedure as far as possible".

This Committee consists of the Directors of Contracts of every Ministry plus representatives of the Treasury and the Post Office. But there was no permanent nor independent chairman in peace-time. Each Director of Contracts took his turn in the chair.

Further, the Committee, at most, met only five times a year; so it had little chance of working out a policy of collaboration or of enforcing whatever it did work out.

When war broke out the position became worse. Although the chairman of the Treasury Inter-Service Committee was made permanent chairman of the Contracts Co-ordinating Committee, and so could act as a referee between the various directors and see that whatever policy was adopted met the needs of the Service and the country as a whole, committee meetings were fewer while the work greatly increased.

Departments were evacuated. Directors were overwhelmed with their work inside their own departments. They could not spare the time to come in person to meetings on policy. At best they were only able to keep in touch with their colleagues by post.

Exactly the same thing has happened to the inter-departmental committees which have existed for a long time. On them sit senior officers of Ministries concerned, and their function is to let other Ministries know what each is doing and to discuss policy, in order to avoid conflict.

Even in peace-time these committees could not meet frequently, because their members all had heavy and responsible duties in their own Ministries which took up most of their time.

Now that war is here and many Ministries are evacuated, the meetings seem to have lapsed almost entirely. Officials have even more work to do and even less time to spare for journeys to London from Llandudno or Harrogate. So what collaboration there was in peace-time has now vanished.

3.

Another reason comes from the way in which work is divided up among the various Ministries in accordance with the type of service to be rendered rather than with the class of person to be served.

For example, the Board of Education's job is to supervise the type of education given in the schools of the country. If Ministries were organised on the basis of the class of person served, there would be a Ministry which was responsible not only for the education of a child, but also for building the schools in which the child was educated and for attending to its health.

That would mean that this Ministry would have to have sections devoted to health, other sections devoted to building, as well as the main sections devoted to education. But that would come to mean that there would be such sections in every Ministry.

A Ministry, for example, that was responsible for the well-being of the people while they were at work would need to have health sections and building sections. Health and building would be equally the concern of a Ministry which dealt solely with the armed forces or solely with people at leisure. All that might mean a lack of concentration in each department.

Instead, while the Board of Education deals with the actual education a child receives, the Ministry of Health is responsible for its health, and hence for the type of building in which it gets its education, while nowadays the Ministry of Works and Buildings is largely responsible for erecting the building which is asked for by the Board of Education, and designed or approved by the Ministry of Health.

This makes for specialisation inside Ministries. But it also means that the contractor who builds the school has

to deal not with one but with three different Ministries and with many different officials.

For many years, in war and peace, the building trade has complained that it has had to deal with as many as seven different Ministries when it is doing Government work.

Owners of all kinds of factories complain about the number and variety of inspectors with whom they have to cope, inspectors who check the quality of their product, the rate of wages they pay, the ventilation or the safeguards round machines that they provide. Could not there be one inspector for each industry, asked the Anderson Committee on Pay, and so save the time of industrialists?

The Civil Service answer is that one man could hardly have sufficient knowledge to test the quality of beer and see to all the working conditions in the brewery, including rates of pay. Each of these is a specialist job. If they are all lumped on to one man, that man would have difficulty in acquiring the detailed expert knowledge of each subject that he needed, and there would be an inevitable splitting up of the functions of Ministries.

Instead, for example, of all questions of health being concentrated in the Ministry of Health, some would have to be dealt with by the Board of Trade, others by the Mines Department, still others by the Board of Education.

Better, says the Service, to concentrate the men who give a particular service, such as safeguarding health, inside a particular Ministry, even if this means that there will be many Ministries which have to deal with a particular industry.

There is, obviously, some sense in this, but from it arise many of the vexations against which industrialists are now protesting.

#### 4.

By far the most important reason, however, for the lack of cohesion in the Civil Service is that the job of providing cohesion is entrusted to the Treasury, and the Treasury is incompetent to provide it.

The influence of the Treasury on the Government machine is enormous for two reasons. It holds the money

and is responsible, under Parliament, for seeing how it is spent; and, under Parliament, it controls the personnel of the Civil Service.

Each Ministry draws up its own budget showing what its standing charges are and including proposals for new spending. But not one of these proposals will reach even the Cabinet until it has been vetted and approved by the Treasury. Once Treasury approval has been given, the proposal goes to the Cabinet, and thence to Parliament.

When approved by Parliament, Treasury supervision of the Vote comes in again. For there can be no upward variation in the Vote without Treasury consent, and without that consent no money voted for one purpose can be used for another.

At all times, therefore, officials in other departments have to consider not only whether any proposal that occurs to them is good, but also whether it will be approved by the Treasury; and this means that the Treasury attitude of critical concentration on book-keeping tends to permeate the whole Service.

The permeation is all the more marked because of the control exercised by the Treasury over personnel. This control began in 1815, when the salaries of Civil Servants were first made a charge on the Consolidated Fund, and it has been steadily reinforced in succeeding years, until by Order in Council, 1920, the Treasury was given power to "make regulations for controlling the conduct of His Majesty's Civil Establishments and providing for the classification, remuneration and other conditions of service of the persons employed therein".

If a Ministry wants to increase the size of its staff, or to promote an official from one class to another, it must go to the Treasury; and if a Ministry needs a new head, the appointment for practical purposes is made by the head of the Treasury.

This means that those who get promotion tend to be Treasury minded, and those who become heads of Ministries are not only Treasury minded, but have the same brand of Treasury mind as the official who happens to be head of the Treasury at the time of their appointment.

As if all this were not enough to cast other Ministries in the Treasury mould, the Treasury is made responsible for keeping the other departments efficient. It issues rebukes on matters both large and small.

On one occasion a memorandum from the War Office was so written that the questions of compulsory and voluntary retirement were confused. The Treasury wrote heavily back: "It is one thing to compel an officer to retire voluntarily, another to permit him to retire compulsorily. Please keep the two distinct lest worse confusion befall."

And when the War Office proved itself blunt-headed on another matter, the Treasury drafted it a letter written in words of one syllable. Instead of the formal, "I am directed by the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury," were the words, "My lords bid me state," and the address became, "War Lords, Pall Mall".

Such magisterial pronouncements, usually phrased with less humour, may fall at any time upon any department whose work displeases the Treasury. And if the Ministry persists in error, the Treasury can and will reduce its supplies and can and will prevent the promotion of the officials responsible.

The result is that what the Treasury thinks today, the rest of the Service does next year. But what the Treasury neglects the rest of the Service ignores. One of the things the Treasury neglects, as we have already seen in Chapter One, is up-to-date office methods.

Of the accounting methods used by the Treasury in the nineteenth century, the Commissioners on Public Accounts wrote as follows:

"The Imprest Roll is all written in an Abridgement of the Latin Language. The Sums are both expressed in Characters that are, in general, Corruptions of the Old Text and are in use no where that we can find, but in the Exchequer; Characters are very liable to Mistakes, inconvenient and troublesome even to the officers themselves: the Sums so expressed cannot be cast up. Most of the Accounts of the Exchequer are made up Twice: first in common Figures, that they may be

added together; and then turned into Latin and the same entered into Exchequer Figures; And that the high Numbers in a declared Account may be understood, they are written in common Figures under the Characters."

Charles Dickens, in a speech before the Administrative Reform Association in 1855, was even more scathing. He talked about the tallies which had been used in Norman times as receipts given to sheriffs for their payments on account. Although an Act of 1783 had been passed to abolish them they were retained by the Treasury until 1826.

Dickens said :

"Ages ago, a savage mode of keeping accounts on notched sticks was introduced into the Court of Exchequer; the accounts were kept much as Robinson Crusoe kept his calendar on his desert island.

"In the course of considerable revolutions of time, the celebrated Mr Crocker was born and died; Mr Walkinghame, of the Tutor's Assistant, and a terrible hand at figures, was born and died; and a multitude of accountants, book keepers, actuaries and mathematicians were born and died; and still official routine clung to the notched sticks, as if they were pillars of the constitution, and still the Exchequer accounts continued to be kept on splints of elm wood, called tallies.

"Late in the reign of George III some restless and revolutionary spirit originated the suggestion whether, in a land where there were pens, ink and paper, slates and pencils and systems of accounts, this rigid adherence to a barbarous usage might not possibly border on the ridiculous. All the red tape in the public offices turned redder at the bare mention of this bold and original conception and it took till 1826 to get the sticks abolished.

"In 1834 it was found that there was a considerable accumulation of them; and the question then arose—what was to be done with such worn-out, worm-eaten, rotten old bits of wood? The sticks were housed at Westminster, and it would naturally occur to any in-

telligent person that nothing could be easier than to allow them to be carried away for firewood by the miserable people who live in that neighbourhood.

"However, they never had been useful, and official routine required that they never should be, and so the order went forth that they were to be privately and confidentially burnt.

"It came to pass that they were burnt in a stove at the House of Lords. The stove, overgorged with these preposterous sticks, set fire to the panelling; the panelling set fire to the House of Lords; the House of Lords set fire to the House of Commons; the two houses were reduced to ashes; architects were called in to build others; and we are now in the second million of the cost thereof. . . ."

Criticisms like those made by Dickens can still be made of the Treasury today. The building itself looks like a Museum of Fine Arts closed for the winter. Its rooms are dark, its furniture is shabby and its methods appear to be both.

Yet this is the body which is charged with improving the efficiency of the Service and of welding it into a working whole.

Because of its great importance in the Service it is worth while seeing in detail how it works.

## 5.

The Treasury is split up into departments, and each department into sections or divisions. There are three departments, one dealing with finance, another with the supply services and a third with the management of the Civil Service.

The Finance Department today has only one division, which deals with all kinds of banking, notably the Government's relations with the Bank of England, works out the detailed figures and gives general advice to the Chancellor on the Budget and taxation, gives advice on new Government loans and controls borrowing in the new issue market.

The Supply Services Department has four divisions,

one dealing with arts and sciences such as museums and art galleries, another with the fighting services, a third with the curious combination of the Post Office, the Foreign Office and Broadmoor Asylum, and a fourth with education, health, transport and labour.

The Establishments Department has three divisions, one dealing with superannuation, transfer, sick leave, and compensation for injury for Government employees, including the Civil Servants, another with their grading, pay, hours, recruitment and promotion, and a third with the conditions of work in the Service departments and with such questions as fair wages on Government contracts.

The Treasury staff is split up not only among the various divisions, but also into classes.

The clerical class of about 100 under a chief clerk is responsible for the Central Registry, which acts as a clearing-house for all letters that come in and for all records that are filed. Some of its members are also attached to each division to do the typing, despatch of letters and the search for papers and even precedents.

The Executive Class consists of accountants under the Treasury Accountant, the deputy accountant and the assistant accountant. There is a staff of about twenty altogether, whose duties are to prepare orders for and keep records of payments from the Exchequer account at the Bank of England, record all details of House of Commons Votes, deal with interest payments on the National Debt and keep the accounts of the Treasury itself.

But the most important work of the Treasury, as of every other Ministry, is reserved for the Administrative Class, consisting of some eighty officers. This is the class which devises and designs the financial proposals which are placed before Parliament and which has from day to day to consider and decide upon proposals put to the Treasury by the various Ministries.

Most junior rank in this Class is that of Assistant Principal, of whom there are normally about nine in the Treasury, receiving salaries which range from £275 to £625, according to length of service. The youngest of these have just reached the Treasury from the University,

and are going through their training either in other Ministries or by doing the rounds of the various divisions in the Treasury itself. Their immediate senior, known as a Principal, is teaching them the routine of the office and checking what work they are given to do.

There are normally twenty-nine Treasury Principals, paid between £800 and £1,100 a year, and next above them are the twelve Assistant Secretaries, paid between £1,150 and £1,500, who may have to take charge of a division. Best known of the present-day Assistant Secretaries is probably Mr R. G. Hawtrey, whose views on the management of money, as revealed in his books, must have staggered his colleagues.

Next are the seven or so Principal Assistant Secretaries, earning £1,700, and above them are the Under-Secretaries or Controllers, paid £2,200, and in charge of one of the three departments. Notable among these senior officials are Mr S. D. Waley and Mr B. W. Gilbert. Mr S. D. Waley's brain is quick and exact, Mr B. W. Gilbert's is solid and powerful. Mr Waley made his reputation in the intricacies of Peace Treaty finance, Mr Gilbert in the proceedings on the May Committee on Economy, of which he was chairman. Neither is capable of accepting a proposal which does not satisfy his intelligence in every particular.

Above them are the two Joint Third Secretaries, the Second Secretary and the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury and Head of His Majesty's Civil Service, who is, at present, Sir Horace J. Wilson, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., C.B.E., and is paid the highest salary in the Civil Service, £3,500 a year.

Sir Horace's career has not been typical of the Treasury. He began in the War Office, went on to the Board of Trade, joined the Ministry of Labour when that was separated from the Board of Trade, and remained there as Permanent Secretary until 1930, during which time he earned especial recognition through being called a "ruddy wonder" by Mr J. H. Thomas and by successfully doing the staff work for the owners in the General Strike. It was not till 1935 that he reached the Treasury, and within four years, at the age of 57, he was made its head.

It is sufficiently remarkable that a man who had spent much of his active life in the Board of Trade and the Ministry of Labour should be made head of the Treasury. But more remarkable still was that as soon as he became head of the Treasury he was encouraged by Mr Chamberlain to take over functions from the Foreign Office.

He was constantly at Mr Chamberlain's side during the crises of 1938-9, walking with him in St James' Park, flying with him to Munich, sitting at his right hand in secret conferences.

It was generally believed that many of the actions which Mr Chamberlain took were taken on the advice of Sir Horace Wilson, and because many of these acts seemed foolish at the time and have since proved to have been tragic, Sir Horace was and is still regarded by many as wrong-headed and dangerous.

This hostility to Sir Horace is understandable, but it is having some unexpected and unfortunate results.

In theory, it is a good thing to make a man head of the Treasury who has not spent his lifetime in the Treasury. Because of its position of control not only over Civil Servants but also over the actions of individual Ministries, it is essential that the Treasury should have a wide understanding of everyday problems and should be able to consider these problems in a light which is not entirely financial. Yet nothing is so narrowing as a lifetime of figures. Florence Nightingale once wrote of the officials in the Purveying Department that "their habits and honour fix their attention upon the correctness of their book-keeping as the primary object in life"; and the same might well be said of routine Treasury officials.

Sir Horace, however, within the limits of a Civil Service career, had had wide experience in a variety of Ministries and as Chief Industrial Adviser to the Government, he had dealt with all manner of problems in industry outside a normal Ministry's routine. The violent hostility which his actions aroused is swinging even progressively minded people round to the belief that it is, after all, better to stick to the routine officials rather than try experiments which may turn out as disastrously as Sir Horace Wilson has done.

Sir Horace's career has had a further unfortunate effect. We have seen that though Civil Servants are now compelled by the nature of their work to be initiators, they still have to cope with a system in which they are supposed to be merely agents carrying out detailed instructions. This system and their own habits of mind induce them to put off initiation until the last possible moment.

Sir Horace *was* prepared to initiate decisively; but because what he initiated was strongly disliked, progressive-minded people have begun to feel that it is dangerous to allow Civil Servants to have powers of initiation, and Civil Servants themselves, seeing the attacks to which Sir Horace was subject, are thankfully taking refuge once more in inaction.

There is one further point. Probably at any time, certainly in war, it is desirable and necessary to bring men with outside experience into the Civil Service. In July 1940 Mr Seymour Cocks, the Labour Member for Spennymoor, asked the Prime Minister whether he would replace certain senior Civil Servants by men "capable of initiative and rapid decisions", and on the same day Mr Richard Stokes asked whether the Prime Minister would bear in mind that the country was "fed up with the stagnation in the Civil Service".

But in the same question Mr Cocks had asked if the Committee which had been appointed to look into the Treasury would have regard to the "unfortunate influence of Sir Horace Wilson".

In fact Sir Horace Wilson, for more than a year, *had* been bringing new blood into the Service. Indeed, in July 1939 he was sharply attacked for a plan to introduce well-known personalities from the business and professional worlds into the Civil Service over the heads of professional Civil Servants.

The trouble was that the men whom Sir Horace would be likely to bring in would be those who would have the same approach to the problems of the day as he had, and would therefore tend to perpetuate his disastrous policies. For that reason, the whole principle of outside appointments was attacked. But the principle was a good one.

Below Sir Horace in the Treasury is the Second Secretary, Sir Richard Valentine Nind Hopkins, G.C.B. Because any permanent secretary has to supervise the whole Civil Service, and because Sir Horace, in addition, took on duties outside the Treasury, the task of internal administration of the Treasury was left to Sir Richard.

Sir Richard was once chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue, and while there developed his ability to grasp detail. For five years he was the Controller of the Finance Department, and while there acquired a mastery of financial technique. He has the perkiness of a robin and the robin's determination to stick to his particular piece of territory, and during the last nine years he has earned his £3,000 a year by sticking closely to Treasury affairs.

Below him are the two Joint Under-Secretaries, Sir Frederick Phillips, K.C.M.G., C.B., and Sir James Alan Noel Barlow, K.B.E., C.B., C.B.E. Sir Frederick has spent his whole career in the Treasury and is known as the Treasury's 'No-man'. He presides over deliberations which cover a vast field, from financial relations with foreign countries to the administration of the public debt, and presides with effective silence. It is said of him that the minutes of any meeting he attends will end with the words "Sir Frederick Phillips indicated dissent".

His colleague, Sir James Barlow, has had a more varied experience. He has been Clerk to the House of Commons and Examiner for the Board of Education, and has served in the Ministry of Munitions and the Ministry of Labour before reaching the Treasury.

## 6.

All these officials have spent their lives in the Civil Service, and have therefore no direct experience of methods of work outside in the business world. With the exceptions above noted, most of them have spent their lives in the Treasury. Naturally their decisions are taken from the Treasury angle, and this angle may be out of perspective.

There was one Permanent Secretary who said that he was unable to "sleep o' nights for thinking of the defenceless condition of the British taxpayer", exposed to all the demands of the spending departments.

Still another, Mr William Lowndes, invented the saying "Take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves".

Such an attitude has its limitations. It tends to make those who hold it think in terms of finance instead of human well-being, and check not only waste, but progress as well.

Still another Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, Sir Thomas Heath, writes these words in his book, *The Treasury*:

"But even the view taken of the Treasury as a bugbear or bogey is not without its advantages in practice. The administrative staff of the Treasury, by means of their specialised knowledge and experience, acquired as a rule by long training, are often able to offer advice to the Chancellor of the Exchequer which secures the rejection of a proposal for increased expenditure received from some public department, institution or individual, but it is safe to say that there is a still greater number of proposals which the mere existence of the Treasury prevents from coming forward at all."

In other words, the spending departments, which, for reasons already mentioned, have a bias towards inaction, become confirmed in their habits by the knowledge that whatever they propose and prepare will probably be turned down by the Treasury.

The more enterprising, of course, will persist. The Officers of the Ordnance, for example, wrote to the Treasury in 1694:

"Your lordships have been always so kind as to pardon our troublesome addresses, when Their Majesty's affairs have not permitted you to assist us; but we are now brought to such a pinch in point of credit, for carrying on our business, that a small chiding and a round sum would please us better."

But the majority just sit back, and the Treasury gives them a convenient excuse for doing so.

#### 7.

Obviously there must be some body to supervise the Civil Service as a whole and to keep the various Ministries

from rushing off at tangents or stagnating in isolation. But the Treasury is not the body to do this. Concentration on money produces a narrow, cheese-paring outlook. The eyes of Treasury officials have become so glued to the expenditure column of their account books that they cannot see the changes in the world outside. Though accurate book-keeping and economy in a mere money sense are desirable, they should not be the paramount consideration, and certainly not the sole consideration, of the body which supervises the Service.

Referring to the muddles which developed about camp construction, the Treasury itself told the Select Committee:

"It is generally neither practicable nor justifiable for the representatives of finance to intervene directly in the matter of selection of site. Nevertheless . . . they can verify, before the proposal reaches its final stage, that full consideration has been given to the various aspects, including finance, and that the advice of the proper officers has been taken."

In peace-time the Treasury could to a considerable extent exercise this wider supervision besides maintaining its exacting watch on purely financial aspects.

But in war the volume of work has become so great that the Treasury is not able to keep full watch even on finance. Individual Ministries and individual officials, for the first time in their lives, are finding themselves with public money to spend and no one to watch how they spend it, and the result has often been gross extravagance and waste. As for the other aspects of supervision, they have been more than ever neglected.

In place of the Treasury what is needed more than ever before is some body which is outside all departments and outside industry, and yet has accurate knowledge of the workings both of industry and of each Ministry; without executive duties, but manned by people who have had executive experience, whether in the service or in industry; and charged with the job of planning policy for both on a national basis and armed with powers to enforce it.

But the establishment of any such body would mean

drastic changes not only in the service, not only in industry, but in the whole conception of the functions and constitution of government.

So long as Government, industry and people are, as it were, three separate groups confronting each other, so long will mere reform of the Civil Service defeat itself and concerted national effort be difficult, if not impossible.

So long as industry is owned not by the whole people, but by a group, that group will struggle against any control which is not self-imposed, and will therefore prevent the creation of an administrative machine efficient enough and powerful enough to plan and execute for the country as a whole.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

HAS THE Civil Service, then, no good points? Certainly it has.

One vital condition of good government is that the servants of the Government should be incorruptible; and the instances of a British Civil Servant either receiving bribes to use his position unfairly for someone else's advantage or using the knowledge he acquires in his job for his own personal gain are so rare that when they do occur they are outstandingly remarkable.

Besides being incorruptible, the majority of Civil Servants are hard-working. There was a time when the Board of Trade could be described as a "sort of gently ripening hothouse where eight members of Parliament received salaries of £1,000 a year for a certain time in order to mature at a proper season a claim on £2,000". At the very time when the Industrial Revolution, Cook's discoveries and Adam Smith were beginning to turn the world upside down, Gibbon, himself a Civil Servant, could say: "I enjoyed many days and weeks of repose without being called from my library to the office."

### 1.

Those days ended, at the latest, in 1914. We had begun the last war with an army of 160,000 men, which turned

out to be 20,000 less than a month's British casualties on the Somme in 1916. It compared with the 1918 army of 3,500,000 men.

Food had actually to be supplied in that year for an army of 5,363,352, including Dominion, United States and Colonial troops, and this involved the Government in buying up the entire meat output of Australia and New Zealand, all frozen meat from the Plate, and very large supplies in the United States, Canada and South Africa.

By the end of the war the War Office had operated sausage factories all over the country and bakeries as far away as Gallipoli. Provision of horse transport for some of these troops forced the Government to buy up the entire British hay-crops from 1914 to 1918 and arrange for the distribution to farmers of the surplus.

The 842 motor vehicles available in 1914 had become 121,692 by 1918, and petrol requirements had risen from 250,000 gallons a month to 10,500,000 gallons. Peace-time arrangements called for the supply of 2,500 spades a year. During the war 10,000,000 were actually used by the services.

Before 1914 the greatest amount of ammunition the Government had ever had to supply was the total of 273,000 rounds fired during the whole of the South African War. In the first six months of the last war 1,000,000 rounds were fired, and a further 1,000,000 were fired in the next three months.

It is not surprising that the War Office was forced to increase the numbers working in it from 2,000 in 1914 to 22,000 in 1918, not counting those who had left it during the war for the newly formed Air Ministry and the Ministry of Munitions.

## 2.

The work placed on the Civil Service during the last war was still further increased after the Armistice, until by 1939 the Civil Service had three distinct and almost equally staggering jobs.

First, it had to administer the reform legislation slowly admitted through Parliament by the ruling class during

the past century and catering for the more urgent needs of the poor.

Such are the social services of health, pensions and unemployment. Each year 18,360,000 people are medically treated under the Insurance Department of the Ministry of Health, 2,500,000 receive pensions and 14,000,000 are covered by unemployment insurance. Expenditure on these services has risen from £38,000,000 before the last war to £200,000,000 before this one.

Second, it had to safeguard the lives and property of everyone in the country. In mines and factories it had to enforce rules of safety and general conditions of work laid down by Parliament; it had to supervise the speed and quality of motor-driving and was directly responsible for the maintenance and improvement of 4,500 miles of trunk roads; and it had to enforce all the ordinary laws of the country, involving the supervision by the Home Office of some 60,000 policemen.

Third, it had to cater to the needs of British industry and agriculture. This meant such police work in the interests of particular industries as restricting imports by means of tariffs, encouraging exports by legalising differential prices at home and abroad, or stimulating home production by subsidies.

It meant such police work in, the interests of all industries and, indeed, of the whole country, as supervising the flotation of companies, protecting copyrights and preventing fraudulent bankruptcies.

It meant direct supervision of various industries, not only public utilities, but also industries which were of especial importance to national defence; and it meant the direct running of certain enterprises such as the Post Office and the State arsenals.

In addition to, or as part of, these three jobs the Government was responsible for the safety of the State in war, and had therefore to recruit, equip and maintain the armed forces of the Crown.

All this involved the still further duty each year, before the war, of acquiring and administering some £880,000,000. Even when the standing charges of the National Debt and of the armed forces were subtracted, there still remained

£440,000,000, or one ninth of the total income of the country. These figures compared with the £52,000,000 administered at the time of the Crimean War. Yet, on April 1, 1938, all this work was being done by no more than 599,999 whole-time or part-time Civil Servants.

That means that despite their vast volume of work, Civil Servants number only one in seventeen or, if local government officers are ignored, only one in thirty of the gainfully employed population. The majority of them, then, have to be hard working.

And they do their hard work for little money, by business standards. Some of the top local government officers, it is true, are paid business-like salaries. The Clerk to a County Council, for example, can receive as much as £7,500 a year. But no one in the national Civil Service can ever be paid more than £3,500.

This is, of course, a good salary, but it is small compared with the £30,000 earned by at least one of the Big Five Bank chairmen, the £40,000 earned by the chairman of at least one big combine, or the £80,000 paid to Marlene Dietrich for a single film.

Besides being done cheaply, honestly and conscientiously, some of the work of the Civil Service, at least that part of it for which the Civil Service system is suited, is done competently.

Full use at the present time is certainly not being made of Britain's man-power. But in the technical job of registering, examining and calling up those men and women who have eventually been conscripted to war work of one kind or another, the Civil Service has, on the whole, acted with courtesy, consideration and despatch.

One further point. Though we complain that the British Civil Service remains out of touch with new ideas and even more out of touch with the people it serves and governs, it is certainly less remote than the Civil Service in France, and certainly less dictatorial than even the pre-Nazi Civil Service in Germany.

The detailed work in many important fields, ranging from education, health and housing to transport, air-raid protection and lighting, is left to 12,000 full-time established local government officers acting under some 13,000

local authorities, with only general supervision by the central Government.

It is true that the machinery of local government, like that of the central Government, seems designed to prevent change. The rating system is a tax on improvements, and the more an owner improves his property the higher rates he will have to pay. And if a town or city wants to improve its amenities by some new development, such as a new transport system, it has to get special powers by a Private Bill in Parliament. The cost of the witnesses, lawyers and other fees is so high—one Private Bill cost the City of Birmingham £44,750—that Councils who fear that an increase in rates will mean a decrease in the votes they get at the next election, think twice before they incur such expenditure.

Yet, despite such serious defects as these, the combination of central and local responsibility is less bureaucratic than, say, the French domination of the prefect by the Ministry of the Interior. British Civil Servants are remote and out of touch with every-day life, but they are less remote than they would be if they had no regular contacts with local officials who are themselves in constant touch with the ordinary people whom they serve.

### 3.

Are there no remedies which, without making a complete revolution in the way we organise our community, could be applied immediately during the war and remove some of the more obvious abuses of Civil Service procedure?

Business men say, "Certainly there are. Adopt business methods of running Ministries."

They complain particularly about the slowness of Civil Service procedure, with its memoranda and minute-writing, and point to the greater speed which is made possible in business enterprises by the use of the telephone and verbal discussion instead of paper work.

But business men for the most part are their own masters in peace-time. At the worst, they have to explain themselves to their shareholders only once a year; and as shareholders' meetings are poorly attended, it is nearly always possible for even the shadiest chairman to win the

support by packing the meeting with his own friends or with his office employees who shout down awkward questions.

Many company directors do not have to face even the formality of a public meeting, since their businesses are partnerships without shareholders, or private companies whose shareholders are in the family.

But the Civil Service enjoys no such convenient security. At any moment its activities may be questioned by Parliament or by the Press, and it must have the evidence ready in permanent form for its justification and defence.

This exercise of criticism and investigation by Parliament of the activities of the executive machine is still desirable, even though thereby the machine is compelled to work more cautiously than an ordinary private business.

That is one reason why the Civil Service cannot adopt entirely the same methods that are used by competent business men outside. There are other reasons why it does not and should not adopt certain of the practices on which business men thrive.

In business the threat of dismissal for an employee or of bankruptcy for an employer is regarded as the spur to effort. To some extent this economic fear does prevent laziness and may stimulate enterprise. But it may also prevent a man from calmly and methodically giving his best, and it certainly does prevent him from undertaking things merely because by so doing he will benefit the community. Where profit is the driving motive, the needs of the community become a secondary consideration.

The attitude of the Civil Service is sharply different from the attitude of business men, both to its staff and to its job. The threat of dismissal and the fear of poverty in old age are not used as a regular spur to activity. Once a man enters the Civil Service he becomes at least reasonably safe from dismissal. When a servant's work is unsatisfactory, it is thoroughly investigated by a departmental committee and even by the Treasury before any decision to dismiss the man is taken.

This, to a business man, would seem waste of time; if there is any doubt about a man's worth in business, he is

fired. But the Civil Service is a public employer, and tries to set a more responsible standard than that.

The actual number of dismissals from the Service on grounds of inefficiency in the year ended March 30, 1930, numbered no more than twenty-seven out of an established staff of 230,000. In place of economic threats, the Civil Service tries to use the powers of persuasion, the example of colleagues and the stimulus of doing public service as the means of securing efficient work from its employees.

There is no evidence to show that the use of these methods is responsible for the obvious defects of the Service. Indeed, there is some evidence that what merits the Service possesses are, in part at least, derived from the very fact that its servants are not driven by the same sort of pressure that afflicts employees in ordinary business.

The Civil Service is also unlike business in its attitude to its job. The question of profit, which is the mainspring of business and induces business men to produce fancy luxuries while millions are short of essentials, hardly enters into Civil Service considerations.

Whatever may have been the concealed intentions of the ruling class when it allowed such legislation to pass through Parliament, the Civil Service at least administers pensions, health insurance and its other services because these services are necessary, and not because they are immediately profitable.

The adoption of a business-like attitude towards public work might, indeed, have disastrous results. Consider, for example, what would happen if the Army were run as a profit-making concern.

The chairman and directors of the Army would have to concern themselves with getting an army which was efficient in the job not of preserving the safety of the country from attack, but of producing dividends for its shareholders.

One source of revenue, undoubtedly, would have to be aggressive expeditions abroad in the piratical tradition of Drake and Hawkins, to capture not only treasure, but raw-materials resources which could be profitably sold. It may be that the Army is in fact used for just such purposes

now, but that is not the fault of those who are responsible for Army administration.

Other sources of revenue for the Army Ltd. would be the hiring out of troops to take part in films, to mount guards of honour at weddings and funerals and to give ceremonial parades for the benefit of newly elected mayors.

Most profitable of all would be the Army bands, hired out to give concerts in the public parks or on private estates. Indeed, when a war broke out it would probably be found that the Army consisted almost entirely of bandsmen, partly because they were good revenue-producers and partly because, if the number of fully trained soldiers was restricted, those who were available would be able to command higher fees because of their scarcity value.

Certainly the adoption of business methods as they have come to be practised in Great Britain would not make the Civil Service war effort more effective than it is; and the introduction of business methods in the sense of precise adaptation of means to ends and the most advantageous use of every agency employed is not possible without that revolution in the way of organising our community which the present ruling class will never tolerate.

#### 4.

One thing, however, that the Civil Service could and should do is to take the risk of giving more responsibility to officials away from Whitehall.

It is true that few officials are used to responsibility and may make a hash of it when they get it. But the hash they make could hardly be greater than the chaos which today is spreading through some Government departments. Attempts to deal with a greatly increased volume of work by the old routine have not only caused bottle-necks, but have robbed the old routine of its one virtue: that of preventing mistakes. Whitehall has become overwhelmed.

There was the important armaments concern which early in 1937 was told that it was to be given a Government contract. When months passed and the detailed contract did not arrive, the firm began to agitate, and was told that it already had the details. Eventually the Min-

istry found that it had got mixed up with a firm of a similar name.

Then there was the Army field cashier who applied, as he was entitled to do, for a small car for his own use. To his surprise, he received, not a small car, but one three-ton lorry, one large limousine, one motor-cycle and one mobile bacteriological laboratory complete with microscope. It turned out that the clerk in the War Office who was dealing with the various similar applications that had come in let his finger slip one down on the list and gave the cashier what had been applied for by the applicant next below him.

Neither of great importance, perhaps, but there are many instances like them.

Some attempt *has* been made to relieve the centre and let the men on the job get on with it.

In peace-time, officials at Devonport dockyard, for example, had little responsibility. They were actually forbidden to set up a matchboard partition without permission from the Admiralty. And when their request came up to the Admiralty it was passed round to as many as nine different sections, none of which was necessarily interested in getting the matter attended to quickly. Such a system is bad enough at any time. It is madness in war, and has been abandoned.

What was done at Devonport needs doing elsewhere.

### 5.

Another point. The remoteness of Civil Servants and their lack of knowledge both of the habits of the people and the practices of the industries with whom they have to deal can only be remedied when the Service is recruited from the whole body of the people and the selected men are regularly sent back into everyday life for refresher courses.

These, however, are proposals for which in war there is no time. Yet it is more than ever necessary at the present time that Civil Servants should lose their remoteness and get down to the facts of war-time existence. They cannot now go out into industry to learn how industry works, but there is a way in which they can be kept in direct day-to-day touch.

In this war, perhaps for the first time in his history, the ordinary British working man is beginning to take an interest in the management of the place in which he works.

Hitherto he has been chiefly concerned with working conditions, such as hours, wages and dilution, and has left management alone. So long as he was paid the trade-union rate and worked trade-union hours, he did not go on strike if there was waste in his workshop, or if the quality of the goods he was told to turn out was deliberately lowered for the sake of profit, or if the workshop as a whole was run inefficiently.

That attitude has begun to change in this war. The workers on the nightshift in a department of David Brown's, Huddersfield gear-cutting engineers, found that the blue-prints of some work they were given to do were marked "Subject to inspection by the Japanese military authorities". This at the end of 1939, after the war had broken out and Japan had shown her sympathy with the Axis.

The workers walked straight out of the shop and refused to go back; their stand was mentioned in Parliament, and eventually the Prime Minister himself was forced to step in to stop further shipments of material from this firm to a potential enemy.

Again, at the great aircraft factory at Speke near Liverpool skilled workers found that though they were receiving full pay and overtime, they were in fact receiving little work. They knew that aircraft were badly needed. They felt that they themselves were being wasted.

So, although they had no personal complaint about wages or other conditions of work, they began to hold mass meetings and to send delegations to the Government to demand more work.

The Government explanation of the shortage of work was that the plant was being changed over from one type of aircraft to another, and this may have been true. But the fact that the workers were prepared to take aggressive action to remove what might have been inefficiency, even though the inefficiency did not in any way affect their own pockets and was quite outside their traditional field of interest, was significant and encouraging.

The Civil Service should be making the fullest possible use of this new spirit—and could do so in a very simple way.

In every industrial town in the country there is a well-organised Labour Party and a well-organised Trades Council. There are members either of the Labour Party or of the Trades Council in every workshop in the country. These members are known personally to the secretary of the party or of the Council. The secretary can tell from his personal knowledge which members are liable to talk wildly about small incidents and which can be relied on to report accurately and relevantly on what they see and hear for themselves.

Such reliable members should be encouraged to report to one or other of the secretaries the inefficiency and waste, whether of men or material or machine, that they see for themselves in their own shops, and the secretaries should then be encouraged to sift and check the reports they receive and forward the result to whatever Government department is concerned.

The organisation necessary for this information service would have to be set up through the National Executive of the Labour Party and of the T.U.C.

It would involve a jointly signed letter from Middleton and Citrine to be sent out to every Labour Party agent and to every secretary of a Trades Council.

It would mean that each agent and secretary would have to meet together at a stated place and at a stated time each week to receive complaints.

It would mean that publicity would have to be given not only to the time and place at which complaints could be reported, but also to the whole idea of calling in the workers as inspectors and advisers.

It would mean that the Ministry concerned, as soon as it received complaints, would have to send a representative to the works for further inquiries and with powers, if necessary, to impose remedies.

If this scheme worked, it would keep Civil Servants in regular touch with the day-to-day working of industry and would provide a whole new reservoir of talent, knowledge and experience, which is at present untapped.

But such proposals, at best, are still only tinkering. Because it is the State that shapes the State machine, and not the machine that shapes the State, it is not possible to build up an ideal Civil Service and then leave it to weld the community to an ideal too.

So long as Britain is ruled by a small owning class, so long will the State machine be directed to serve the needs of that class. Only by overthrowing that class can the great mass of the people hope to secure a machine that will cater to their needs.

There is, however, one further point, particularly relevant in the present war. Though the ruling class devises the machine to suit its needs, it has first to discover what are its needs. By the time it has built a machine to suit one set of needs, the needs have changed and the process of rebuilding has to begin all over again.

Thus the mercantile system of government, in which the State machine controlled by the King was an at least equal partner with the large estate-owners, became perfected under the Tudors just when the industrial class was beginning to feel the need for *laissez faire* and was beginning its rise to power.

By the time the estate-owners and the industrial class had overthrown the power of the Crown and had relegated the State machine to its appropriate position under *laissez faire*, the skilled working class was beginning to exert pressure and, as a cushion against this pressure, the dominant class began to feel the need of a State machine which could act as governess for the ruled, policeman for the rulers and liaison officer for both.

By the time that machinery had been perfected, the ruling class was requiring a machine which would act not as governess, but as strong-arm thug.

In other words, such is the inevitable time lag between the conception of needs and the establishment of machinery to meet those needs that at any given moment in the country's history the ruling class has tried to operate a machine which was perhaps a century out of date for its purpose. Each generation of rulers has actually got

the type of machine its grandfathers really required. The great mass of the people have just got what they were given, whether they required it or not.

Hitherto it has been possible to follow the changing needs of the ruling class by making adjustments and modifications in the existing machine without scrapping that machine altogether to build a new one. Through all the changes, the fundamental conception of the State machine as an entity in itself, separate from the mass of the people, and separate, too, from the owners and controllers of the nation's wealth, has remained constant.

*L'Etat, c'est moi* was a conception of Louis XIV which has certainly never been felt by the mass of the people who look on the State machine as an agency for charity and an instrument used against them for coercion.

Nor has it been felt by the ruling class, who looked on the State machine as a means of protecting their property and privileges, a power that could be switched on or off as occasion arose. To both rulers and ruled, the State machine was something apart from themselves. That conception is changing fast.

The ruled, in so far as they are becoming Socialist, are beginning to look for a State machine which will not just be one individual agency in the community, but will be the epitome of everything in the community, the means by which the wealth and energy of a whole people are harnessed and concentrated upon the task of securing the well-being of each individual and of the community.

The rulers, in so far as they are becoming Fascist—or whatever word describes the British tendency towards un-uniformed but strong-armed monopoly capitalism—are beginning to use the State machine not as an outside agency to be used as convenient for their own purposes, but as an integral part of the organisation whereby their privileges are preserved and their profits produced. *L'Etat c'est moi* is now the slogan of ruled and rulers.

Whether, therefore, the present rulers manage to maintain their position, or whether they are ousted by the working class, the present government machine, and, with it, the present type of Civil Service, is doomed. The needs of

neither class can now be served by slow-moving Ministries, diligent clerks and capable but remote administrators.

The rulers now need themselves to be inside the State machine, applying the informed energy and the planned ruthlessness of the modern business world to the task of mobilising the full power of the community behind their personal struggle for the markets of the world. And they need a machine which is freed from the brake of public criticism or from any consideration of public well-being.

The ruled, if they win control, will also need a machine through which the full power of the community can be mobilised and directed, though the aim of this mobilisation will not be to produce and distribute limited quantities of what is most profitable but to produce and distribute the maximum quantities of those goods and services which are most needed and which the fully used resources of the country permit.

For this it will be necessary to have both an organisation with powers and scope far beyond anything contemplated for the existing State machine and men in the directing positions with such knowledge and experience as the present Civil Servant can never hope to acquire. It will also be necessary for everyone in the community to feel himself a part of that organisation, sharing in the benefits which result from it and helping to shape the policy which it carries out. In such a society, anything like the Civil Service now operating in this country would have no place.

As we shall now see.

## CHAPTER NINE

CAPITALISTS believe that the well-being of the country will be best served if private individuals, owning the material resources of the country, are left to use them in the way they find most profitable.

They say that prices will clearly indicate what things the country most wants to have produced. If, for example, there are only a few motor-cars in the country and many

people want them, increasing amounts of money will be offered for the few cars there are, and car prices will rise. It will then be profitable to produce more cars, and the producer, while following his search for profit, will fill a public need.

They also say that this search for profit is the best means of stimulating enterprise and so developing the resources of the country in the fullest and yet the cheapest possible way.

If there were no profit to be had out of putting the resources of the country to new uses or in finding and developing new resources, the owners would be content to go on using their resources in the old ways, or even to stop using them altogether.

If there were no profit to be made anyhow, they would have no interest in husbanding their resources and would be likely to use them in the easiest and the most extravagant way. Their desire for profit encourages them to be always on the look-out for new things to produce and for quicker and less wasteful ways of producing them, so that once again the private profit motive results in the public good.

They say, too, that this system of private ownership, private enterprise and private profit gives to individuals the qualities of self-reliance, courage and virility which are essential to the well-being of any community.

#### I.

Socialists deny this. They say that the profit motive, as directed by prices, does not succeed in producing the things which the community most needs. In times when all manner of luxuries are being produced, at least half the people in the country are left without sufficient food, clothing and warmth.

The reason for that is the inequality of income. When the majority of people have spent the whole of their income they still have vital needs unfilled. But there are a relatively few people who, when they have satisfied all their vital needs, have a large portion of their income still unspent. So that while the many still have need of vital things but have no money left to spend on them, the few

have a large amount of money still available which they are willing and able to spend on luxuries. It then becomes profitable to produce luxuries and unprofitable to produce necessities beyond a certain limit, even though they are still badly needed.

In other words, prices are only an indication of the *effective* demand, and the effective demand is gauged by the amount of money available to be spent on a particular article, and not on the community's real need for it.

Similarly, Socialists, while not denying that the profit motive is a stimulant to enterprise of a sort, do deny that it stimulates the best use of a country's resources.

Enterprise will be led by the profit motive into using the resources to produce luxuries when the great majority of consumers are still in need of necessities. But it will also lead producers to produce these luxuries in a way that is wasteful.

If there is free competition, there is one kind of waste.

When, for example, wireless was invented and the public first began to demand wireless sets, all manner of producers saw a chance of profit in making sets. For a very short time the demand for this new article was so great that everyone who produced was able to sell. But soon the demand began to fall to a normal replacement level, and many of the producers were compelled to close down. That meant that plant which had been set up and men who had acquired skill to produce sets were left idle.

That is waste of effort and material and skill.

If there is not free competition, there is another kind of waste. Inequality of income causes a damming up of purchasing power at both ends of the scale, through money unspent and wants unfilled. This means that the producer has only a limited chance of selling the goods he produces. His aim then is to produce only a limited number of goods and to sell them at a high price. To do that, he and his fellow-producers form themselves into trusts and close down many of the plants which otherwise would be producing goods that either could not be sold at all or else could not be sold at the higher prices desired.

This means that effort, materials and skill are left unused, which, again, is waste.

Socialists further say that this system of private ownership, enterprise and profit produces the desirable qualities of self-reliance, courage and virility only in a few.

Those who actually own the means of production do have an opportunity, within limits, to make what they like of their lives and to develop their abilities to the highest point.

But they are only a few, and even they are apt to find that the qualities which actually develop in them are not those which would be desirable for the well-being of any community, but are those of greed, and the desire to exploit their fellow men or rivals.

As for the great majority, they have little chance to develop any qualities except those of subservience.

When they are in work, they earn only enough to keep them above the subsistence level, with no margin left over for luxuries, even those, such as travel, books, and the arts, which go to the making of a full life.

When they are out of work they have to rely on the charity of the State acting for those who own the means of wealth. They live in more or less constant fear of losing their jobs and have a more or less constant struggle to secure the simplest necessities of life.

Such conditions do not develop qualities necessary for well-being and good living.

## 2.

Socialist condemnation of the system goes farther than that. We saw that inequality of income led to the production of luxuries in preference to still-needed necessities, that it caused a damming-up of purchasing power, which in turn induced the producers to cut down production by the formation of trusts. It has a further effect.

When the higher-income groups have temporarily satisfied their immediate wants, they stop buying. Though the lower-income groups still want to go on buying, they have no money to do so. There is, in fact, a slump in demand.

The producers then still further cut down production by throwing more and more plant and men into idleness. This still further reduces demand, since the dole paid to

the unemployed is less than they got in wages, and they are therefore still less able to buy the necessities they need than they were before.

That still further cuts down demand, leads to a fresh curtailment of production and takes the country down to the bottom of a slump in which anything from a quarter to a third of its productive process is lying unused. Machinery rusts and men starve.

Eventually, the higher-income groups come back into the market. They have used up their goods previously bought. They are ready with new needs. The machine is started up again, gathers momentum as new wage-packets are handed out and goes on to the top of a boom, at which point the immediate needs of the higher-income groups are satisfied and the process begins all over again.

The one thing that is more wasteful than this process is war; and war is itself, in part at least, caused by this process. Because of the limitations on purchasing power at home and the consequent limitation on the scope of production, producers tend to go outside the country—to find markets for the goods they cannot sell at home; and to find investments into which they can put the unspent income they cannot profitably employ in the home productive process.

In colonies they can use this money in developing copper-mines and cotton plantations which supply the raw materials cheaply for their productive system. And they can see that the wages given to the men who work the mines and plantations are spent on buying goods produced at home, but unsaleable there.

Every producing country in the world is therefore on the look-out for areas, rich in raw materials, which it can develop and control. Since these areas today cannot be acquired by mere adventurous exploration, they are acquired by force.

A place in the sun, living space, appropriate sphere of influence, empire, are the catch-phrases bandied about by warring nations to cover the real aim of a war, which is to acquire or retain foreign markets in which surplus goods can be sold and surplus capital invested.

And, say Socialists, while wars between nations result

periodically from the system, there is continuous war between classes inside the nations, war between those who own and those who work.

It is to the interest of the profit-making owner to cut his cost of production. The lower the cost of production and the higher the price at which he sells his product, the greater will be his profit.

But the man who works, and whose wages are part of the cost of production, is directly concerned with seeing that his wages are high and that the prices of products which he has to buy are low.

This clash of interests, this class war, is unceasing and inevitable so long as the means of production are privately owned. It leads workers into strikes, go-slow methods, resistance to the introduction of labour-saving machinery and unwillingness to play any part in improving the efficiency of their work. It leads owners into policies of repression.

Such a conflict can only be wasteful. It can never contribute to the general good.

### 3.

Socialists believe that better use can be made of the resources of a country if, instead of being left to the haphazard initiative of private individuals urged on by the profit motive, their use is consciously directed according to a carefully thought out plan.

They believe that an estimate, based on past experience and present practice, can be made of the total needs of the country for the essential things, like food, clothing, housing, heating and transport.

They further believe that it is possible to make a survey of all the productive resources of the country and, from that survey, to estimate, first how many of the essential needs of the community can be met either within the country or by the sale of the country's goods abroad, and then to what extent, when those essential needs have been satisfied, the country's resources can be used for the production of luxuries.

For that job a planning authority would be necessary to draw up an economic budget each year, much as today

the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Treasury draw up a financial budget. And it would be necessary for the planning authority to have control over the productive resources of the country, subject to fully democratic checks, so that once it had had its plan approved, it would have power to make it effective.

But public control of resources would not be enough. There must also be public ownership. Under private ownership a small group of people are paid a great deal of money, not for working, but for owning. That means that the abilities and energies of these people who are allowed to live in idleness are lost to the community—which is waste.

It further means that a small group of people, whether they produce anything or not, are paid far more money than they need for their own personal use, and this inequality of income, as we have seen, leads to booms and slumps, the scramble for markets abroad, and eventually to war.

So that the inequalities of income may be set rigid limits, so that the efficient principle may be established that when there is work for all only those who work shall be paid, it will be necessary to take the ownership as well as the control of industry out of private hands and place it in the hands of the community.

#### 4.

All this would entail an organisation which had the ability and the power to estimate and compare the resources of the country with its most pressing needs, to draw up a plan which applied those resources to the fulfilment of those needs, and to execute that plan.

The difficulties are great; and, in addition to the obvious intellectual difficulties, there are the equally obvious dangers that bureaucracy may creep into so vast an undertaking, that initiative may be stifled, that with the removal of such guides to relative efficiency as competition and prices, it may be difficult to detect inefficiency.

But Socialists believe that these difficulties can be overcome and that community-planned organisation can work more efficiently, more fairly, more happily than any system yet tried.

Because under Socialism every man and woman, every plant, every source of raw material can be put to and kept in work, the total production of the country will necessarily be higher than it is under a system in which a third of the workers and the plant are periodically idle.

Because, under Socialism, so long as there are needs to be filled there will be work for people to do, there will not be resistance, as there is under private ownership, to the introduction of labour-eliminating and cost-saving machines. That will mean that, in addition to the increase in total production resulting from steady and consistent use of the country's resources, there will be an increase in the productivity of individual workers because of the fuller use of machines.

Because this greatly increased production will be more evenly spread throughout the community, the average standard of life will rise appreciably, and the standard of life of the majority, now poorly paid, will rise sharply.

Because the standard of life will rise, bringing with it freedom from economic fear and the positive freedom of opportunity to enjoy a kind of life which has hitherto been unattainable for the great majority of the people, new reserves of talent which have hitherto been untapped will begin to contribute to the industrial, artistic and social life of the community. That will make possible the realisation for everyone now of the Merrie England which was enjoyed by a few in the time of Queen Elizabeth.

What Socialists in England preach as an ideal has to some extent been put into actual practice in Russia. Before describing the sort of machinery which Socialists will need to establish in England, it will be as well to describe the actual machine which has been established in Russia.

## CHAPTER TEN

STORIES OF Russian haphazardness and incapacity used to circulate freely in this country until Russia became our ally. Since then, it appears, the Russians have become efficient, first-rate planners with a genius for mechanics.

The truth probably is that when the Bolsheviks secured power they had to manage a country and a people which were among the most backward in the world; that, after twenty-four years of intense effort, they have been able to teach or impose Socialist efficiency so widely that they are now able to fight on equal terms with the most highly developed nation in the world. But pockets of happy-go-lucky inefficiency remain.

There was, for example, the experience of a party of tourists off to visit Russia. They arrived at London docks to board their Soviet ship, and found that Intourist had booked many of the berths twice over. Arguments began about who had the rightful claim to the berths, and it looked as though the ship would have to sail with two passengers to a berth.

At that moment the Captain announced that the departure would have to be postponed for a short time because, owing to a mechanical defect, the ship was not able to get up steam. At this, a large number of the passengers, who felt that if the ship went wrong in harbour she was even more likely to go wrong at sea, decided to stay at home, and when the ship *did* sail there were exactly enough passengers to fill the berths. "There you are," said the Captain; "what was all the fuss about? It always comes out right in the end."

On the return journey there was again double booking for the berths; and it was only because the train from Leningrad was late and the ship had to leave before it arrived, that passengers were able to get berths to themselves. "I told you it would be all right," said the Captain.

This pleasantly fatalistic attitude, though not general, is not peculiar to one Russian sea-captain. In spite of it, and in spite of lack of mechanical tradition in their people and the appalling ignorance that they found, the Bolsheviks have been able in some twenty years to take their vast country through a stage of development which in England took many times as long. They have set up a network of public organisations which run efficiently some 10,000 separate factories, 5,000 State farms, 1,000 mines, oil-wells, power-stations, a merchant navy, transport,

foreign trade and the other activities of a nation at work.  
How is it done?

I.

In Russia, unlike Britain, there is no division of the community into State machine, owning class and workers. As there is, virtually, no private ownership of the means of production, there can be no owning class standing above the rest of the community and using the State machine to restrict and repress the workers.

Owning class, State machine and workers are in fact merged into one. Not only do the workers, through public ownership, become collective owners, but also, in a far more direct sense than is possible in "democratic" England, they become collective governors through their trade unions, their consumers' co-operatives and their collective political assemblies.

Russia is classed by outsiders as a dictatorship, largely because of the stream of orders which, necessarily in a planned community, come from the centre and have to be carried out by those on the outside.

But as a necessary preliminary to this downstream of orders, there is an upstream of advice, suggestion and complaint by which the eventual orders are influenced and on which they are based.

There are five elements in the organisation of Russia—the representative assemblies, the trade unions, the Consumers' Co-operatives, the planning authorities and the Communist Party.

The representative assemblies are based on the local soviet.

Each village or each district in a town elects a soviet to look after local affairs. Everyone over eighteen has a vote in the election of the soviet and everyone over eighteen may put forward both a candidate for election and suggested instructions for the successful candidates.

All candidates, when elected, can be dismissed by a majority vote of the electors. They have to deal with much of the immediate details of ordinary life in village or district, such as the running of additional trams at rush hours, seeing that when new housing estates are built the

roads to them are built simultaneously, seeing that a store is built into any new blocks of flats which may be distant from the shopping centre.

Through their right to propose any candidate, to propose any instruction to an elected member and to remove the elected member if he fails to do his job satisfactorily, the village or district inhabitants have a much more direct democratic opportunity to get what they want than have the local government electors in Britain.

Above the local soviets are the provincial soviets, and above them still are the Supreme Soviets of the republics into which Russia is divided. Above them again is the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R.

All of these are directly elected. Each of them covers an increasingly wider field, geographically and materially, than the assembly below.

*Through each of them the individual can have a say in the running of his country as a citizen.*

The base of the trade unions is the factory committee.

Each organisation, in fact, whether it is a factory, a ship or a hospital, has its trade union committee in which day-to-day administration is discussed. Each committee has an elected president and secretary and a small elected executive. The executive meets weekly, the general committee monthly.

The job of these factory committees is to see that the management carry out the law in such matters as the provision of proper feeding facilities for the workers and nurseries and kindergartens for their children, and to carry out the duties of a factory inspector in Britain, seeing that the laws about ventilation, protection from dangerous machinery and adequate lighting are enforced.

But they have other duties as well. Trade unions administer the social insurance for some 20,000,000 workers. In each factory there is an insurance delegate elected by and from the trade union members, who visits any member who is ill, sees that he or she gets his wages while he is ill or, if necessary, extra money to meet the costs of the illness and a free pass to one of the rest homes for convalescence. He is also charged with seeing that the illness is real, and not mere malingering.

Through this trade union machinery, holidays are arranged, and extra pay for lower-paid workers with larger families is provided out of a social insurance fund to which all workers contribute.

Even that is not all. It is also the job of the trade unions, through the factory committees or the wider organisations outside the factories, to play their part in affairs which in Britain are left to the management, such as the improvement of technique, the introduction of labour-saving machinery, the improvement of the methods of cost accounting and all manner of matters dealing with the efficiency of the factory and the volume and quality of its output.

Above the factory committees are the local branches, and above them are the central organisations uniting in the All Union Congress of Trade Unions with its Central Committee.

*Through these organisations the individual can have a direct say in the running of his country as a producer.*

The Consumers' Co-operatives have their base in the local consumers' society to which every grown-up can belong as a voter.

This society elects the management committee of the local co-operative shop, the management committee appoints the manager of the shop and he, in turn, and subject to the management committee, appoints his staff. The management committee is the instrument through which local buyers can keep their shops up to the mark, both in promptness of service and in the range and quality of goods sold.

Above the local committees are the district and provincial committees, culminating in the Congress of Consumers Co-operatives, all elected.

*Through these organisations the individual can have a direct say in the running of his country as a consumer.*

## 2.

There are, then, at least three channels through which the individual can effectively and directly say what he thinks of the way in which his country is run and offer advice on any changes he thinks should be made.

Side by side with these upstreams of advice are three channels through which flow the downstream of directions.

First of these is the Executive proper, corresponding most nearly to the Civil Service of Britain. At the head of every department of State is a Commissar appointed by the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R. Such are the Commissar for Agriculture, the Commissar for Heavy Industries and the Commissar for Foreign Affairs. The Commissar appoints his own leading officials, and they, in turn, appoint their juniors right down through the hierarchy.

The Commissar also appoints the dozen or so members of the Trust which, as a sort of executive of his department, is responsible for the day-to-day direction of the work under his control. For example, the daily direction of the heavy industries is the responsibility of the Heavy Industries Trust, consisting of a president, a secretary and some twelve other members, who themselves appoint the managers of the individual factories grouped under them.

But just as the appointment of the commissars, head of the hierarchy, is dependent on the approval of the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R., the citizens' mouthpiece, so the appointment of the individual factory managers, lowest in the executive hierarchy, is dependent on the approval of the trade unions, the producers' mouthpiece.

The second down channel is the Planning Organisation. The Central Planning Body, or Gosplan, consists of about seventy members, most of whom have no other job. Its first duty is to arrange for the collection of every kind of information necessary for drawing up a production budget.

Each individual plant sends in details of the number of workers at present employed, its present output, its potential capacity and any plans it may have to increase both output and capacity by taking on more labour or installing more machines.

Each farm sends in similar figures, so does each mine, each undertaking of every sort; and trained inspectors are sent to help with the compilation of the necessary forms and to see that the figures are both accurate and delivered on time.

Before the figures actually reach the Gosplan they are vetted by the department concerned, and this department

will add its own proposals for increases in output or new developments of any kind. When the figures do finally arrive, the Gosplan can make from them a picture of what would be produced if every individual plant were able and allowed to have its own way.

But the Gosplan has to consider, not one undertaking nor one department, but the whole country. It has to conform to instructions on general policy given to it about the direction in which special effort shall be made. In recent years, for example, it has been necessary to put special effort into the building of armament industries.

Moreover, it has to relate the proposals of individual undertakings and departments not only with the needs of the country as a whole, but also with the country's resources. It has to compare the demand for steel, as indicated by the proposals it receives, with the expected supply, as shown in the figures submitted by the steel plant. It has to relate the prospective demand for food, as shown by past experience and the reports of the consumers' co-operatives, with the expected supply, as indicated by the figures from the farms.

It may have to aim at an increase in food production which will in turn mean either the diversion of steel from, say, armaments to tractors or an increase in the output of steel at the expense of some other product; and, where an increase in output is decided on, the Gosplan has to budget for an increase in transport facilities, if the figures from the railways show that the previous production already provided a full load.

In every decision it takes it has to consider the supply of labour. If the decision is to curtail a plant, the Gosplan has to decide how the displaced labour can best be used. If the decision is to extend a plant or set up a new one, it has to decide how best the labour for it can be spared.

That involves not only knowing what labour is actually available at the time of planning, but estimating, from the school figures, how much new labour will be entering industry during the coming period.

Throughout the initial stages of drawing up a draft plan the Gosplan is in constant touch with the three up-stream channels. On all matters of labour it has to negotiate with

the All Union Congress of Trades Unions, and, with it, decide, for example, such questions as the wage rates to be paid to skilled and to unskilled labour, whether it is advisable to increase wages in one industry to attract more labour, and so on.

And when the draft plan is complete it is submitted not only to the central organisations of government, but also to every individual undertaking, where it is thoroughly discussed at workmen's meetings. Only when it has been so discussed and any proposed changes have been fully considered, is the plan put into effect through the machinery of the Commissars, the departments and the trusts.

The third down-channel is the Communist Party, of some 3,000,000 members, and, like the Gosplan, something entirely new in the history of government.

It consists of men and women who have to undergo strict tests before they are admitted, have to accept the party instructions without question once they have been given, have to be prepared to go anywhere and do anything, at wages which are often lower than could be earned in ordinary jobs, and keep to a standard in their private life which is not expected from ordinary citizens.

About half of them are in ordinary jobs in mine, on farm, or in factory. Their special function there is to increase efficiency by the example of their own skill, to act as the shock troops of industry.

Wherever they are and whatever they are doing, they are teachers spreading the teachings of Marxian Socialism, inspectors seeing that orders sent down are carried out, investigating and if necessary reporting inefficiency either of individuals or of plants, preceptors stimulating and encouraging their fellow-workers to greater effort, flying squads to break down particular bottle-necks.

The party organisation as a whole is without legal status, and yet is the dominating element in the community. It exercises rigid discipline over its own members and, since the Commissars are almost invariably members of the party, the party can dominate their actions.

Through them it can and does lay down the general lines of policy which guide the Gosplan in drawing up its budget. This budget, before it becomes effective, has to be

approved by the Politbureau, the most important committee of the party. Without the approval or at least the acquiescence of the party, little of importance can be done throughout the Soviet Union.

The Communist Party, then, is the instrument with which the other five elements are welded together, which gives them coherence.

But neither the party nor any of the other five elements are separated from the great mass of the people or are absolutely distinct from one another. There are Communist members in the trade unions, in the co-operatives, in the soviets, in the executive, but, except possibly in the executive, they do not preponderate. At least in the first three, non-party members may have the deciding influence, and their influence, from bench and mine and farm, is directly felt not only by the individual party members working alongside them, but right through to the top of each element of government.

There is no longer a government confronting a people, but a whole people taking their part in government under the direction of men who come from the same stock, have had the same upbringing, share the same living conditions and to a great extent do the same work.

The country is directed by picked, trained men who make decisions after consultation with everyone who will be affected by those decisions, and who take the greatest pains to let people know why a decision is made.

The decisions are accepted by the people because they are allowed to have a say in the shaping of them, because they are helped to understand what is the purpose of them, because, even if they do not exactly understand a particular decision, they have come to know by experience that what is done is intended for the benefit of the country as a whole, and not for that of a particular group.

### 3.

The Russians, then, have replaced the profit motive, as the driving force of production, by systematic estimates, based on information from every possible quarter, of their country's needs and systematic planning to use their country's resources to satisfy those needs.

They have replaced the profit motive as an incentive to efficiency by the widespread use of informed criticism, not only in the Press, but in every meeting of works' committee, consumers' society and local soviet, by strict cost accounting, by the collective competition of one works against another.

They have replaced the profit motive as an incentive to individual enterprise to a considerable extent by the pressure of a public opinion which sees slackness as harmful not only to the slacker, but also to his workmates, and by the stimulus of public service in which a man's extra effort improves his own lot by improving the lot of the community in which he lives.

New methods, new inventions, new enterprises are all encouraged, but only partially by money reward. A great incentive is that a man who invents a new machine in Russia becomes a hero among his fellow-workers; he has the satisfaction of knowing that his machine, if it is workable, will be taken up and used for the benefit of the whole community, and not suppressed by vested interests or used for the profit of a few.

In a society where people are forgetting or have never learned the desire to beat their fellows in the accumulation of money, those rewards can be the greatest possible stimulus to enterprise.

Despite the vastness of the country for which they plan, the Russians have avoided much of the bureaucracy which afflicts the much less widespread activities of Britain's Government machine.

There is in Russia, certainly, a lot of talking which to an English business man would seem so much waste—talking in factory committees, in soviets and in consumers' societies.

But this talking is not waste. It is, in part, education which teaches everyone in a works to understand how the works is run and why such and such a decision has to be made. That in itself makes for more efficient work, since most people will work better if they know what they are doing and why.

It is also a source of new ideas on which those who finally take the decisions can draw.

There are, too, in Russia a larger number of people watching what other people do than is desirable—people other than the foremen and managers that one finds in capitalist countries. Half the 3,000,000 members of the Communist Party have paid party jobs, and are thus in a sense paid watchers. The other half, though themselves working, are also voluntary watchers. There are 30,000 full-time union officials, paid watchers, and 300,000 voluntary trade union officials, unpaid watchers. Out of a working population of some 20,000,000 this is no great amount. But it is certainly a greater proportion than would be needed in a Socialist Britain or will eventually be needed in Russia.

Such a high proportion is still necessary in Russia because Russian people before the Revolution had no mechanical background and little education of any sort. Many of them are still hazy about the proper use of oil in internal-combustion engines. Many of them are still inclined to rely on fate rather than their own heads to get them out of a difficulty. They *need* watching.

But as education and mechanical experience spread throughout the population, the need for watchers will steadily diminish, and since, in a Socialist society, every available unit of labour is needed for production or distribution, the number of unproductive officials will be reduced, and is being reduced, whenever that is possible.

But even with the delays which result from educative talking and the loss of man-power that results from educative watching, red tape and the dead hand of bureaucracy are not marked in Soviet Russia.

The machine has been built up expressly for the job it has to do. That job is to promote the well-being of the community as a whole, and not to serve the interests of a particular group. The more efficient the machine, the better will the community be served, and therefore it is to the interest of every section of the community to see that the efficiency of the machine is constantly improved.

More than that, the machine is run, not by people drawn from one class, untrained in ordinary ways of living and inexperienced in ordinary ways of working, but by men who have had personal experience of operating what

they now direct, and who are kept in continuous and refreshing touch with those who remain as operators while they themselves have become directors.

Russia has introduced and developed the science of planning, and she has reinforced it with the art or science of living together as equals with common interest in the welfare of the community. That combination is now proving a match, despite its comparative inexperience of mechanics, for the most experienced and ruthlessly efficient capitalist machine yet known.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

**B**RITAIN IS one of the three most highly developed industrial countries in the world. It has the great disadvantage, compared with Russia, that it cannot produce within its own borders many of the raw materials, particularly food, that it requires.

But it has well-established heavy and light industries, which, if properly organised, are quite capable of meeting all the country's industrial requirements and of leaving a surplus over to sell abroad to pay for imports of raw materials and food. It has a working population which has behind it at least three generations of mechanical skill.

Its area in comparison with the area of Russia is small, and the exact, statistical information about its productive capacity and its consumption requirements is reasonably good.

It would, therefore, be much easier to transform Britain into a Socialist community than it was to transform Russia. The Russian people had no mechanical tradition. The great majority were illiterate. Industry and systems of transport scarcely existed. Knowledge about the resources and requirements of the country was sketchy.

Whatever they needed for a Socialist State—whether it was an informed and intelligent people, well-developed industry or detailed knowledge at the centre on which to base their plans—the Bolsheviks had to build up for themselves. Their work was not only more difficult but

also much slower than the work of Socialists in Britain would be.

Britain already has her capital industries which turn out the machines for the consumption industries, which turn out the goods for a higher standard of life. But before the Russians could think of producing semi-luxuries, or even many consumption necessities, they had first to throw all their energy into building up steel, machine-tool and other industries and forcing their people to do without anything more than a minimum of food, clothing and fuel.

#### 1.

When British Socialists really determine to take the resources of the country into public ownership and control, they will therefore have 150 years' start on the Bolsheviks of 1917.

The Planning Commission, central point of any Socialist machine, will not have to begin its work in the dark. Periodically, for years, a Census of Production has been made in this country, which, though incomplete, gives at least an outline of our productive resources. The machinery used for making it could be extended and used to secure the information about production which the Planning Commission will need.

Indeed, by the time this war is finished, there may well be even better machinery at work, covering at least the industries needed in war. By the end of the last war, the Ministry of Munitions had exact information not only of what munitions could be produced and where, but also at what cost, and the scope of Government inquiry into industry in this war is greater than it was then.

The Commission will also have something to go on in estimating needs. Both Sir John Boyd Orr and the British Medical Association have made detailed and expert surveys of food requirements. They worked out a standard of the amount and types of food that each person must have each week if he is to have a maximum standard of good health. They also worked out what he must have if he is to keep at least a minimum standard of good health. Then, carrying their work farther, they found that about half the people of this country were not getting the maxi-

mum standard and that about one quarter were not even getting the minimum.

These surveys would be an important guide to the Planning Commission when it first got to work.

Further, there have been reasonably accurate surveys made, by Colin Clark and others, about the national income of the country. One of these surveys, for example, showed that if the national income of the country in 1937 had been equally divided, every family of four would have received £270 a year.

From this, the Commission would get a guide not only to what standard of life the country could afford for its people under capitalist production methods, but also how much greater production would be needed before the country could afford the standard of life at which Socialists aim.

There would be other guides. There are people today who have a reasonably fair standard of living—families in the five, six, eight-hundred-a-year class. It would be no difficult feat to find out how they spend their money—how much they need to spend each year on clothes, fuel and other necessities, how much they have left over for semi-luxuries, such as wireless sets, a motor-car, extra furnishings for their houses and so on. The Commission might well set, as its first aim, the provision, for everyone, of the standard of life at present enjoyed by that limited group.

The pivot of the Socialist Government machine, then, would be the Central Planning Commission, but it would be unwise, even in a country as comparatively small as Britain, to have the whole work of planning centred in one Commission. It would be more effective to have Regional Commissions, accumulating the necessary data about their areas and drawing up provisional regional plans, which would be submitted to the central authority, and by it adapted, extended or modified to fit in with the plans of the other regions and with the needs of national policy.

In any case, planning would be decentralised by other means. Below the Planning Commission there would be trusts dealing with groups of industries—the Coal Commission, the Steel Commission and so on.

While the job of the Planning Commission would be administrative, in that it would have to draw up a steel production programme for the year, the job of the Steel Commission would have to be at least in part executive, in that it would be responsible for seeing that that programme was carried out. But in the limited sphere of steel it would also have some planning to do, in that, faced with the demand for a given output of steel during the year, it would have to split up this demand into quotas for the individual steel mills under its control.

Below the Industrial Commissions would come the individual plants. Here, too, there would be planning as well as executive jobs. Faced with the demand for a quota of steel production for its plant, the management would have to work out, on its own, the best ways of assuring that this quota was achieved.

The structure of the Socialist economic machine of government would, then, be something like this—Central Planning Commissions, Regional Planning Commissions, Industrial and Agricultural Trusts, with branches in each region, and individual plants.

## 2.

How can these commissions and trusts avoid the bureaucracy which has paralysed the existing Government departments?

We have seen that among the defects of present Civil Servants are the narrowness of the circle from which they are drawn, their lack of knowledge of how industry is run, their remoteness not only from business managers but also from ordinary people, and their lack of training in the science of administration.

Such defects, under Socialism, would be even more disastrous than they are under capitalism. But under Socialism one of the first steps would be to cut off the peaks and the troughs in the standard of living, and thereby raise the income of the lowest paid. It is, further, a cardinal principle of Socialism to provide an equal opportunity for everyone, and the first essential for that is exactly equal opportunity to have the best education that the country can offer. Education in the country would therefore have

to be made free in the same way that the use of the roads and parks is free.

That would mean that everyone in the country would have the same chance to reach the standard of education necessary for service in the commissions or management of plants; and that would mean that the staffs could be drawn from the widest possible circle.

The lack of knowledge of industry which today handicaps Civil Servants in their work could be remedied in several ways. First, a practical knowledge of industry could be made a routine part of the educational system. Everyone, either during the holidays from school, or after leaving school before going on to the University, could be sent into industry or to work on the land for a six months spell. Anyone selected to go into management or into the commissions could do a two-year practical spell in individual factories after completing his theoretical training course and before taking up his proper job. Everyone in the commissions or in management could be sent back into the practical work of industry as a refresher course at regular intervals.

More important than any of these, the staffs of the commissions and managements could be largely drawn from the men on the benches, the assembly lines, the coal face and the steel furnace.

Supposing the school-leaving age were raised to sixteen. Up till that age, everyone, whatever their capacities, would remain at school.

Above that age, only those who were able to pass their examination tests would go on to the higher education of later secondary schools and Universities.

Those who could not pass the examinations or did not want to go on to Universities would then move into industry. But it would still be possible for these, at night and technical schools, to acquire the training which, as we shall see, would be necessary for the administrative jobs.

Further, outside the commissions and official management there would still be plenty of opportunity for men who had not had the full training to do administrative work if they wanted. In every individual plant it would be

desirable to have a shop committee, meeting regularly to discuss the running of the plant.

I do not think that government by committee works any better than government by dictatorship. But I am sure that people do their work better if they know why they are doing it, that if the problems of the plant are fully discussed and understood by all who work in the plant, the efficiency of everyone will be increased.

I am also sure that if the men and women on the job are encouraged to discuss the difficulties they meet in their work and to comment on the way things are run, efficiency will be raised still further. This would be the task of the shop committee.

The general committee would consist of everyone in the plant, meeting, say, every three months, with attendance compulsory. Its executive committee, of a few elected workers, would meet every week, and to its members the workers could come individually with their suggestions and comments.

In that work there would be plenty of administrative scope. It would, in fact, be one of the most fruitful recruiting grounds for the administrative posts proper.

In addition to this, there would be the still further administrative openings in the trade unions themselves. As now, the trade unions would have the job of seeing that the general laws about working conditions were applied in detail in every shop. The national organisations of the trade unions would, as now, have the job of representing their members on wage and transfer of labour and the like. Its representatives on the Planning Commission would have to interpret proposals in terms of their effect on labour and restrain any planners who might be too enthusiastic for "efficiency" at the expense of human comfort and well-being. Further, the trade unions might well be given the jobs which are undertaken by trade unions in Russia but in England are left to Government departments, such as the administration of pensions for those who retire from industry because of the age limit or injury, sick pay and the like.

For such jobs as these, special training would be essential. And many who were disinclined to take the training

necessary for the commissions or for management inside a plant would find, in the trade unions, administrative work for which they were fitted.

Here, too, it would be essential to prevent the growth of that remoteness which is fossilising the present Civil Service and some of the present trade unions. This could only be done by recruiting trade union officials from the men and women who are actually on the job, keeping an elected trade union official, wherever possible, on a practical job of work, at least part time, and regularly sending back all officials for a refresher spell in the works.

In all these ways a source of administrative talent, at present untapped, could be opened out, the administrators could acquire and retain an intimate knowledge of the practical work they were called upon to administer, and they could retain their direct contacts with the people for whom they were administering.

But even with the extension of education, the practical training in and regular contact with industry and people at work, there would be a still further essential piece of training, particularly for the administrators in the commissions.

### 3.

That training is in the science of administration.

The ruling class, at least in this country, has a curious belief in the amateur, whether in sport, or in running an industry.

Councillors, M.P.s, Cabinet Ministers all get to their jobs and hold to them without having had any systematic training in anything and, as we have seen, the only training that Civil Service administrators get in the complicated science of administration is advice from their superiors, who were similarly untrained, and hit-and-miss experience on the job itself.

But there are things which an administrator must learn and which cannot be learned only by experience, however wide, and certainly not by the limited experience which is granted to a Civil Servant today.

The qualities which go or should go with a trained mind, as understood by Universities, such as ability to seize on

the relevant facts from a mass of material, arrange them clearly and make a balanced judgement upon them, are necessary.

So are the qualities which go or should go with wide-awake experience, such as ability to understand what are the real needs of the people served, whether they are running industries or working in them.

So, too, is a width of interest, not only in the workings of other Ministries in the same service, but of other services in different countries and in a wide variety of questions only indirectly bearing on the immediate work.

But, besides these, there are technical attributes which an administrator must be taught. One of these is the knowledge of how to use statistics. Almost every day the administrator has to make a decision which is based on figures derived from the innumerable but often necessary forms which groaning clerks are filling up all over the country. Few things can be more revealing than accurate figures, if properly handled, and nothing can be more misleading than figures in the hands of an untrained man.

Figures may be produced to show that the health of a group of people living in a certain set of houses is worse than the health of another group living in another set of houses. From this it might be deduced that the first set of houses are unhealthy, that they should be condemned and that the inhabitants should be moved to a new set.

Such deductions have in fact been made, and made frequently. The old houses are condemned under a slum clearance order and the inhabitants moved out to a new housing estate. Then it is found that the health of the inhabitants who have been moved remains as bad as before. Why?

It may be that their health was bad because they could not afford enough to eat or because, even though the original houses were healthy, there was unhealthy overcrowding in them.

A man trained in statistical work would make tests of all the measurable factors before coming to a decision, and would certainly eliminate all other factors affecting health before making up his mind about the condition of the houses. Yet decisions are made every day on matters cover-

ing almost every aspect of human life by men who are presented with figures, but have not the training to use them properly.

Mastery of figures, goodness knows, is not enough qualification to govern one's fellow human beings. But nor are a warm heart, a clear head and good intentions. Administration requires a combination of qualities which, though by no means superhuman, are at least extraordinary and go far beyond the bounds of what the Civil Service gets—or seems to expect—from its Servants today.

By such methods as these it should be possible to build a corps of men and women which, though in a sense *élite*, would keep in direct and regular contact with the ordinary people for whom it was administering.

One branch of this corps would, in fact, have to keep in continuous touch with every form of economic activity. The various commissions would need to have their own inspectors, not only to see that output and efficiency were being maintained and quotas fulfilled, but also to suggest improvements in technique and to hear any suggestions for improvements made in the factories themselves.

These inspectors would need the very highest qualifications. They would need to know the particular industry they were dealing with and keep their knowledge up to date with all the latest methods of technique, so that they could go to the individual factories and help, advise and stimulate.

They would also have to come back to their Commission with any reports of any special difficulties which had not been foreseen by the Commission when it drew up its budget, and keep the Commissions themselves in constant touch with the needs and problems of industry.

#### 4.

This training given to those who were to administer industry would also have to be given to those who were to administer the other services of State, such as health and education.

It is not enough for the local officer of health to be a good doctor: he must also be a good administrator. It is not enough for the officials in the Board of Education to

be good administrators: they must also have practical knowledge of teaching problems and methods both at home and abroad.

The necessity to train administrators scientifically and to keep them in constant direct touch with the work they are administering applies just as much to other fields of government as it does to industry. And it could be achieved by the methods outlined above.

These methods, however, would still be ineffective were it not for the fundamental change in the relationships between the constituent elements in the community which Socialism would bring about.

There would no longer be two classes, the one owning and the other earning, whose interests were in direct contrast. There would no longer exist a State machine on the one hand and a loose conglomeration of industries on the other. There would no longer be an uneasy partnership between industrialists who know one industry well and care about nothing else, and Civil Servants who know no industry at all, but are supposed to administer not only for the whole of industry, but also for the whole of the community.

There would be no owning class in the sense that individuals would be paid, as they are now, not for working in a factory, but for having money in it. Everyone in the community would be alike, in that they would be paid for working, unless they were too old or too sick. Everyone, therefore, would have the same interest—to produce as much as possible in the most efficient way in order to have as much as possible with the least possible effort.

State machine and independent industrial control would be merged into one, with no one industry having a special incentive to run against the interests of the community or to sabotage its wishes, with administrators drawn from the ranks of industry and continually going back into them.

In place of conflict would come unity.

But there is still the obvious danger that this unity would become the unity of the grave, a unity in which there is no incentive, in which everyone just rubs along. This danger can be avoided.

Socialists do not want, and would not tolerate, the price-cutting, wage-slashing and stopwatch speeding that go with capitalist competition. But they will still need competition.

They do not want, and would not tolerate, the piling up of fortunes or the uncontrolled acquisition of power which are the incentives under capitalism. But they will still need enterprise.

They do not want, and would not tolerate, the autocratic determination to "do what they like with their own" which is known as initiative under capitalism. But they would still need initiative. And they could get all three.

In every individual plant there would be scope for initiative. The plant would be given its production quota for the planning period, but, subject to national laws about hours, conditions and wages, the methods by which that output was achieved would be left to the individual plant. It would be to the interest of everyone in the plant, whether they were managers at their desks or producers on the machines, to get that quota fulfilled as quickly as possible, for if they got their production through within the period given, the time saved on the job would be their own—with pay. Every man and woman in the place, therefore, would have a direct incentive to look for ways of speeding up output.

In every individual plant, too, there would be scope for enterprise. Provided the inequality of income is not allowed to reach the point where lower paid workers have not enough for a good life, while the highest paid have more than enough for a luxurious one, there is no reason why under Socialism piece rates should not be paid as an encouragement to extra effort and bonuses for extra efficiency. But, beyond these, there would be the additional spur to enterprise. Every extra effort that a man made would contribute, not to the profit of his boss, but to the well-being of himself and of his fellow-workers.

And in every plant there would be scope for competition. In every plant there would have to be close attention to costs accounting, as a check on waste. While the individual rates of pay would be taken right out of the hands of the individual management and would be settled nationally,

there would be no reason under Socialism why the management should not try to reduce the total wage costs of its plant.

Reducing the total wage costs would mean not the cutting of wage rates, but the most economical use of labour. And if a management which had previously used 100 workers found that it could do with eighty through the introduction of machines, that discovery would be welcomed, and rewarded, under Socialism, since it would provide twenty more workers to supply other of the virtually limitless needs of consumers.

Cost accounting would give an accurate guide to the relative efficiency of each plant, and each plant would have the spur of competition with other plants in the same line to bring down its costs. If one plant's costs persistently came higher than others, it would be the duty of the inspectors and of the Regional Planning Commissions to find out why, and, if necessary, to make changes in the management. If the costs of any plant were persistently lower than elsewhere, it would be the right of the management to receive special bonus awards.

Scope for incentive, enterprise and competition would all be there to draw on the producers to their maximum effort. But even the best of machines will grow rusty unless the spirit of those who work it remains keen.

I believe that the incentives of Socialism—in part monetary reward, in part the knowledge that one's efforts are being consciously directed to benefit not a group of remote shareholders, but the actual community in which one lives—will prove a spur to effort incomparably greater than anything that has yet been seen in this country.

It is now well known that, even under capitalism, the productive energies of the nation rose sharply under the stimulus of the Dunkirk crisis, which momentarily filled almost everyone with a sense of the need for united effort to a common end. The feeling evaporated as soon as it was realised that no matter what the crisis, capitalists would neither give up their privileges nor change their practices. But the spirit was for the moment aroused.

Here is another example of the incentive to enterprise and to service without personal profit which the pleasure

of serving one's community can arouse even under capitalism.

5.

The Ministry of Labour sent out a circular in the spring of 1941 to all local authorities, urging them to keep their people at home for their holidays. This circular reached the Town Clerk of Huddersfield, and by him was sent on to the appropriate Council committee—the Parks and Cemeteries.

The chairman of this committee was a working-class man, Alderman Arthur Gardiner, now the second Labour Mayor of the Borough. He read it out to his committee and suggested to them that the way to keep the people of Huddersfield from using the railways during their holidays was to provide inducements to them to stay at home.

The committee gave power to Alderman Gardiner and his deputy, Councillor William Bolt, to go before the full Council and ask for funds to provide Holiday-at-Home entertainment. The Council provided £500, and Bolt and Gardiner got to work.

Their obvious starting-point was the largest open space in the town, the great park at Greenhead. Here, on the hillside barely out of the town, were green trees, grass lawns, ponds, tennis-courts and freedom from the soot of a hundred textile mills. They decided to make the park the centre of their holiday plans.

What entertainment could they provide in the park for which people normally look on their holidays?

First, for the children. There was, of course, no sea. But the ponds could be used for paddling and sailing boats. One of the ponds was accordingly set aside for paddling, another, widely used by the model yacht club of grown-ups, was set aside for boats. Nurseries were organised with voluntary helpers where mothers could leave their young children to play in safety. Games were set going, again under voluntary supervision, in which the older children could join if they wanted.

The local model railway club volunteered to set up a model railway on which the children could ride. An appeal on the wireless brought in an offer of donkeys from a

seaside town, and throughout the six weeks of the scheme the children of Huddersfield got their donkey rides almost on their own doorstep.

Then for the grown-ups. The public baths were thrown open for swimming competitions. The young reporter who had organised the tennis competitions for the local paper, the *Examiner*, was called in to organise a holiday tournament which was eventually watched by thousands. Bowls competitions began, a marquee was set up to provide the hot water or tea for picnics on the grass. But something more than this was needed.

Bolt suggested a cricket match on the ground used once a year by the County at Fartown. He knew that various star cricketers were to play in Manchester the following Sunday. He thought he could persuade them to put on a game at Huddersfield.

So he and Gardiner went off to see George Herbert Hirst, Huddersfield born, and most popular cricketer in the county. George Herbert went off with them to Manchester, and those few star cricketers there who did not feel like giving up another Sunday for the people of Huddersfield came willingly for George Herbert. Two teams, entirely composed of Test or County cricketers, played a match forthwith during the Holiday week. With equal success, an exhibition Rugby League game between star teams was arranged later on.

But all were agreed that to have a successful holiday you must have concert parties. Bolt, a joiner and undertaker in private life, agreed to build an open-air stage in the park, the Corporation supplied the lighting. Bolt and Gardiner thereupon called in Kenneth Levell, secretary of the local operatic society and, since the war, organiser of the concert parties which had toured troops in the area. He asked his various concert parties to lend a hand. They agreed, and on twenty nights during the running of the scheme top-line concert parties played to an average of 4,000 persons a night.

And when there was no concert, there was the band of the Royal Signals, helped out by local bands, to play for open-air dancing on the grass.

Judged by numbers alone, the scheme was a tremen-

dous success. On one Saturday as many as 30,000 people came into the park. Every day throughout the scheme the people who began their holidays dropped into holiday clothes, walking about the streets and up to the park in open-neck shirts and flannels. All day long the children played in the fresh air and sun of the park, well looked after by voluntary helpers, so that their mothers could have even more of a rest than they would have done at the seaside.

And the cost of all this and more beside was £500 of the town's money.

It was done because the four men principally responsible for it—Alderman Gardiner, Councillor Bolt, Captain Irons, the Parks Superintendent, and Kenneth Levell—are all men who live and work in Huddersfield, who know what Huddersfield people want, who know what are the resources of the town, have the ability to organise those resources and can take pleasure in working themselves black in the face so that their own people can be happy.

If you can find that spirit under capitalism, which normally sets every man against the other, how much more could you find it under Socialism, under which every pull and every incentive is towards co-operation for the good of oneself through the good of the community?

With that spirit and with Socialist machinery it will be possible to get an England that is green and pleasant, an England that is prosperous, happy and at peace.

